

MAGE CHRONICLES

Volume 3



Includes:
Loom of Fate™
Chaos Factor™

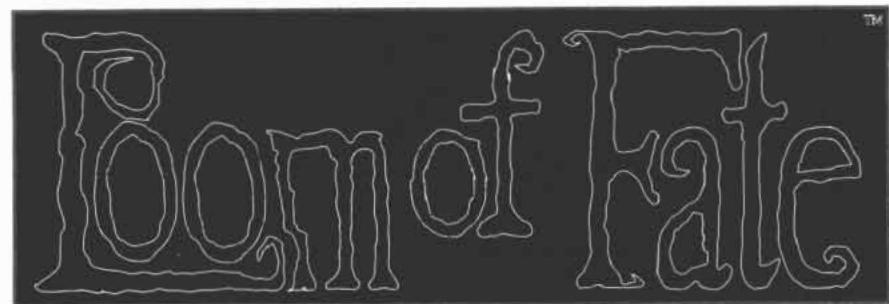
A Story Sourcebook for Mage: The Ascension™



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Book of Fate

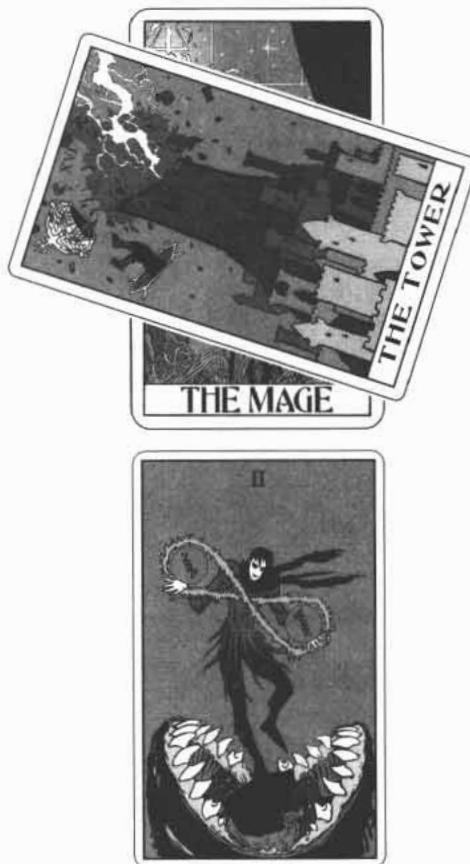
A Tale of Destiny
for Mage: The Ascension™



Choices Made and Futures Followed

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act V, Scene II)



By Chris Hind

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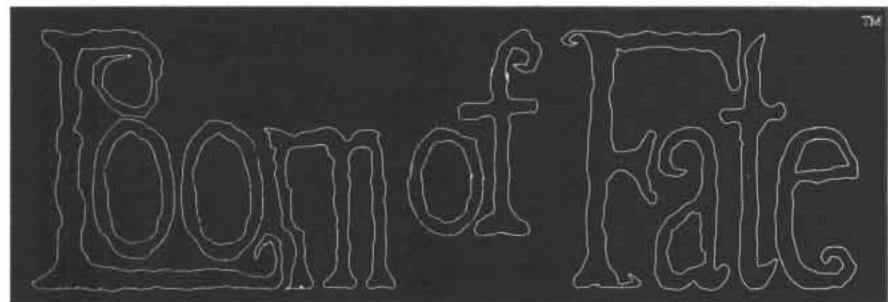
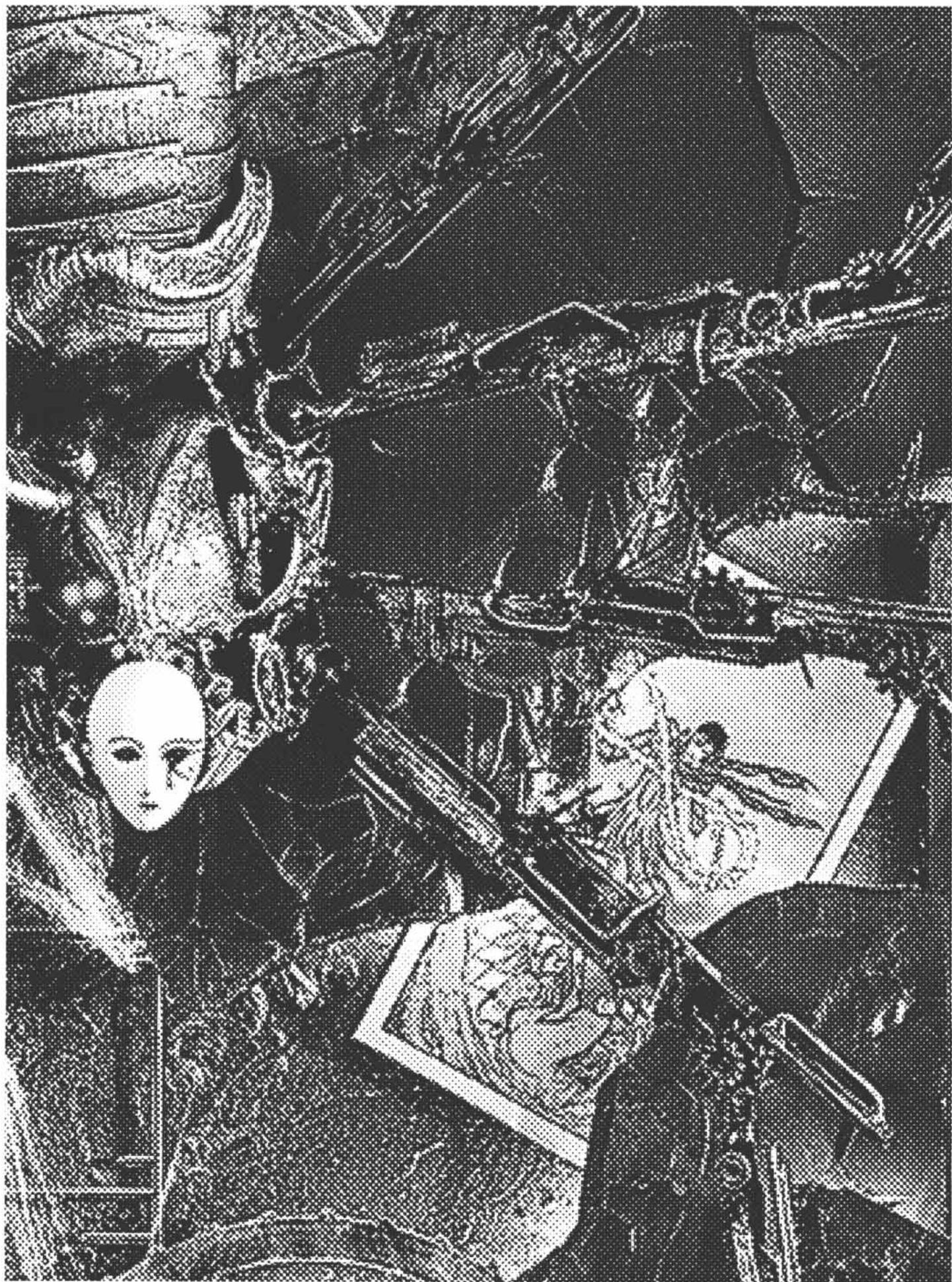
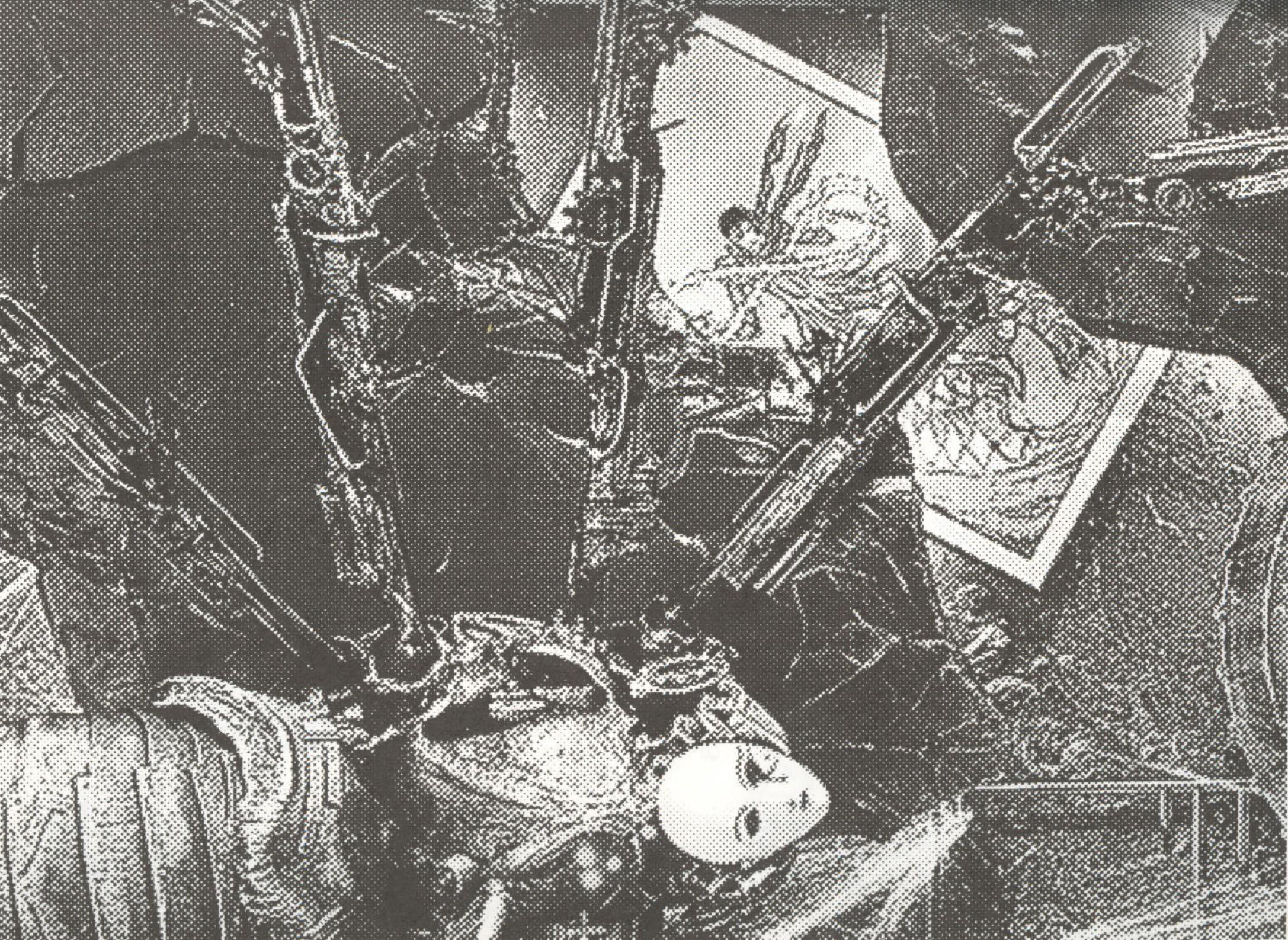


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Introduction: Once and Future Things

*Another Voice, when I am sleeping, cries
"The flower should open with the morning skies"
And a retreating whisper as I wake —
"The flower that once has blown for ever dies."
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXVIII*

Loom of Fate is a complete four-chapter story for **Mage: The Ascension**. Set in San Francisco, it entwines player mages in a web of usury and tragedy, where free will threatens to unravel the very fabric of reality. This supplement details plots, characters and settings, thus enabling your troupe to tell an earthshaking story. Appendix One compiles all character descriptions for ease of reference. Appendix Two contains guidelines for running a Tarot-like card-reading.

This plot encourages character interaction and problem-solving rather than violent confrontation. Therefore, any number of player characters of any level of enlightenment may take part. They may represent diverse Traditions, though students of the Spheres of Time and Spirit are most appropriate.

This adventure expands on "All Hallow's Eve," the scenario given in the back of the Mage rulebook, but differs in several ways from the first story. If you have already run "All Hallow's Eve," you may wish to modify the details given in this book to conform to the original story. If not, run **Loom of Fate** as it stands, incorporating any elements of "All Hallow's Eve" that you want.

Variations on a Theme

As Storyteller, you may use Loom of Fate in a number of ways. First of all, this story could be told with no modifications. The scenes included should provide enough roleplaying, mystery and action to last several gaming sessions. Second, you might modify the existing scenes or add others to suit your troupe's style of play. If you feel particularly ambitious, you could even change the setting from San Francisco to elsewhere.

Loom of Fate could also become the first chapter in a continuing chronicle. The Bay Area is integral to the Technocracy's American operations, and warlike players could wage a long and dangerous guerrilla campaign against the Technomancers. Though this "Fighting the Technocracy" concept seems the most obvious of many options, other plot threads offer possibilities.

At this moment, several players are reading these words; stop immediately or risk ruining your own enjoyment. Storytellers — and we know who you are (••Correspondence, •••Mind) — please continue.

Background: The Wyld Bound

In the beginning, there was a place of power: a hilly headland where Gaia's children felt her pulse more strongly, where gods walked among mortals, and where strange entities were born. Undulating dunes near the western sea held a powerful Node linking Earth to a Wylding Realm. Though a few brave Dreamspeakers drew power from the local pools of Quintessence, for the most part static reality had yet to conquer this Wylderness. Dynamic magick held sway.

Then one summer day a foreign ship dropped anchor offshore. Pale men disembarked. They explored briefly while repairing their ship and replenishing supplies, but were driven off by wild beasts and an unstable reality. Before sailing west, these explorers affixed a brass plaque to a post near shore. Its inscription claimed the land for a distant queen. Though Sir Francis Drake's claim was premature, that 17th day of June in 1579 foreshadowed mankind's conquest over the Node.

The invasion evidently angered the spirits. A short time after the pale men departed, a massive earthquake shattered the area, creating what would later be called the San Francisco Bay. Many native people died, and the Uktena werewolves created a caern to guard a site where they said a spirit called the Cataclysm slept restlessly. Hereafter, there were only occasional tremors, and these were accepted as the price the land demanded from the mortals dwelling there.

Before Europeans arrived, Native Americans accepted magick as a natural part of reality. They had only slightly bound the Wylderness through the natural process of human nature attempting to impose order and structure on the unknowable. The Europeans, under the fledgling Technocracy, changed all that.

Technomancer scouts came with the first explorations into the West, mapping Wyld magic out of the lands they "discovered." They noted likely bases of operation as they went, and San Francisco, with its harbor, mountains, stable climate and powerful Node, seemed perfect. As the Technomancers wove their spells of containment, the Wylderness weakened. Around the mission of San Francisco de Asis, the Technomancers raised a city, which suppressed and eventually smothered the Wylderness. The Technocrats of San Francisco now control this dormant Node, tapping its raw Quintessence.

To contain the spirits of the Wyld, the Progenitors and Void Seekers (the old name for the Void Engineers) summoned a powerful pattern spider named Cob, reinforcing it with great power. Over the years, the Technomancers have increased Cob's might with cybernetic enhancements, Weaver spirit essence, and bio-restoratives. In return, Cob has stabilized the region, allowing the Technomancers to

establish a brisk overseas trade, an international idea exchange, and several important laboratories.

The Wyld, however, will not be denied. Shifting chaos strains against Cob's web, and some leaks through the mesh. Wyld spirits tear at the strands of the web, and Cob and its fellow pattern spiders must repair this web daily. This conflict is mirrored in the contrasting social orders of the Bay area. On one hand, rich and conservative elements struggle to control the city. On the other, San Francisco's famous radical subcultures strive for ultimate freedom. The Quintessence of the region feeds on this dichotomy and is fed by it in return. The Bay area is neither dynamic nor static, but a wildly shifting combination of both.

This Quintessence fluctuation further erodes Cob's static structure. Constant struggle has weakened the pattern spider. Periodic attacks upon Cob itself by Marauders and Wyld spirits have hastened the process of inevitable entropy. Eventually, Cob will lose its power and cease to exist.

This decay was graphically demonstrated in 1906. On April 18th, Cob lost cohesion. Wyld Things broke loose from the web and raged across the Near Umbra. This Wyld Quintessence manifested in the real world as earthquakes and fire, and in the terror and confusion that followed.

By frantically manipulating symbols of order, such as the city government, Technomancers restored order to San Francisco. They did not comprehend the magnitude of the problem, however, instead assuming that mere lack of vigilance had allowed the magick of the Node to escape.

Cob had, in fact, regained control only through sheer will. Furthermore, the 'Quake of 1989 and the tremor of October 1993 prove that even Cob's will is insufficient. The Wylderness threatens to break free, perhaps awakening the fabled spirit Cataclysm in the process, unless an equally powerful pattern spider replaces Cob.

The Umbral struggle has attracted the attention of many groups. Even the Technomancers have recently become aware of the difficulties of Cob. Some mages wait to see what happens; others take advantage of the situation.

In one camp stands a Progenitor Chantry led by Dr. Himiitsu of the U.C. Medical Center. Himiitsu plans to transform Norna Weaver (an Orphan) into a pattern spider to replace Cob. Norna's powerful Avatar, great Destiny and Orphan status make such a reincarnation possible. Directly opposing this plan are a gang of nameless and faceless Marauders. They have learned that Norna can potentially imprison the Wylderness in a static net, giving the Pattern a powerful new grip on the Bay Area. Only their alien perceptions and lack of organization have prevented them from eliminating her thus far....

The player characters will soon find themselves entangled in this web of destiny. Their actions may tip the balance for fate or free will. The most difficult factor of this equation is understanding where free will ends and destiny begins.

Wyld and Weaver

Mages understand that creation is an ongoing process, measured in dynamic change and static stability. Both are necessary elements of reality. Without change, there is no advancement. Without stability, advancement loses momentum and spirals into formless chaos, achieving nothing. Many Tradition mages feel that Ascension lies between these extremes. This line is a narrow one, and few agree on where it's drawn.

The Ascension War wages around that line. The Technocracy would enforce stability by containing the Wyld. The Marauders would rend that woven Pattern, setting the Wyld free. Tradition mages know that either course threatens the tenuous hold that sustains human civilization. Loom of Fate draws the battle lines through the center of San Francisco. Who knows which card Fate's fickle hand holds for the city, or for the Sleepers within?

Plot Threads

This section summarizes the chapters forming this book and explains how they relate to the overall story. It outlines a probable course for the story and discusses key events that advance the plot. The plotline presented here is not the only option, or even the best one for your troupe.

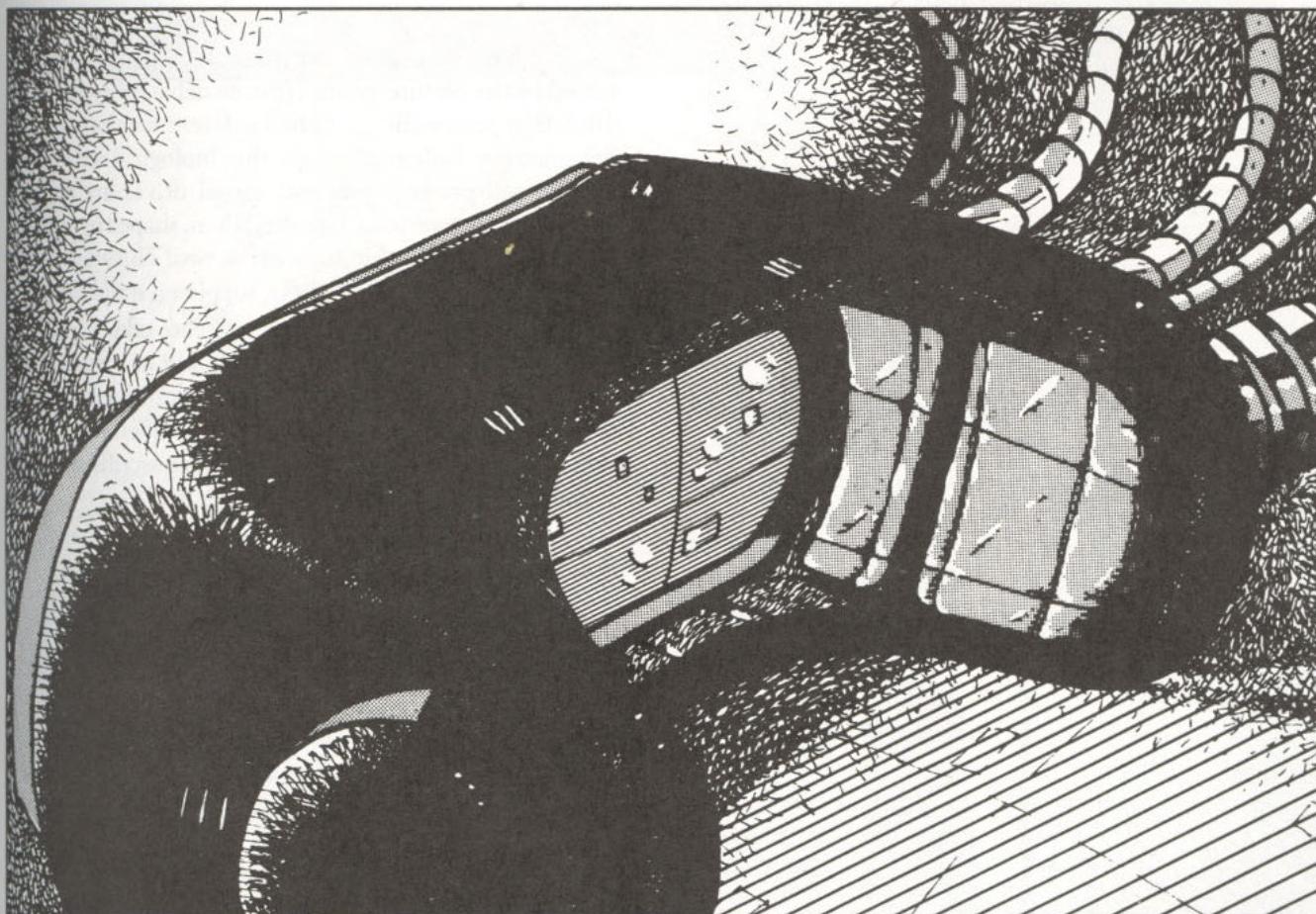
Feel free to modify, delete and add any scenes you feel would contribute to a good story.

Note that the pacing of this story is very much left to you. As presented, the story starts on October 31st; a tempest rages through much of the story. Marauders attack, and a Technomancer Symposium is held to decide the Technocracy's course of action. These bits can be molded to conform to the actions and desires of the characters.

A glance at the "Aftermath" of each scene reveals how these story threads relate to one another. Each scene suggests one (and usually more) possible continuations of the story, beyond those the players choose for themselves. Thus the plot, while nonlinear, is still structured. Remember that players tend to tread the unbeaten path; they may surprise you with their goals and how they pursue them. When possible, encourage their input and be prepared to improvise scenes.

In the end, the outline below is simply a guideline, a reference aid and a convenient means of explaining the story. Once a Storyteller understands the basic plot, she may more easily modify it and can always consult this framework if things get confusing.

Note that the order of these scenes is nonsequential. You may find yourself flipping back and forth through the



book as the troupe follows various leads. Therefore, it helps to familiarize yourself with the general layout.

The Basic Outline

Chapter One: Player-character mages travel to San Francisco (if they were not there already) to participate in a fortune-telling session. While on their way, they stumble through a chaotic accident scene caused by the subconscious magick of Norna Weaver and the imminent arrival of a group of Marauders. The players discover that Norna is wanted by the Technocracy. By helping her, the mages also become targets. At the end of the scene, Madame Cleo Verthank performs a Tarot reading that hints at a horrible fate.

Chapter Two: Here, player mages must take the initiative. After researching various topics, they discover just enough of what is going on to pique their curiosity. They discover that Norna Weaver is destined to become a prominent mage, if properly molded. Mages who visit San Francisco's Umbra may discover a number of significant sites. Hints of a powerful, dormant Node provide prompting.

While delving into Norna's mundane life, the players discover yet another layer of the plot to capture Norna: both her parents have died at the hands of the Technocracy. Later, Marauders attack, intent on eliminating Norna.

Chapter Three: Events begin to move more rapidly. The Technocracy holds a Symposium wherein Technomancers propose their plan to transform Norna Weaver into a pattern spider. While the Technocracy meets, Marauders attack and injure Cob, causing a minor earthquake. At some point, Dr. Himiitsu contacts the mages. By revealing his plans, he hopes to gain the characters' help...or at least set them up for an ambush.

Chapter Four: During the story's climax, characters take the battle to the Technocracy's home turf. They search for clues in Merika Seth's apartment or Dr. Himiitsu's office at the U.C. Medical Center. Finally, they invade the Technomancer Chantry known as GeneTech Lab, or even Cob's lair in the Umbra.

Conclusion: Depending on the mages' action, the story ends in one of two ways. Either they sacrifice Norna for the greater Technocratic good, transforming her into a pattern spider — or they protect Norna from her fate and watch as...nothing happens. Though the mages have been led to expect the worst, some hidden force keeps reality from unraveling. A new clock, however, has begun to tick, and the fate of San Francisco may not be denied a second time....

Theme

The future is not set. There's no fate but what we make for ourselves.

— Reese, *The Terminator*

Loom of Fate focuses on two major conflicts. The first and most obvious is between static and dynamic forces, represented by Cob and the Technomancers on one side, and the Wylderness and Marauders on the other. But beneath this surface tension lies a deeper conflict between fate and free will. Which of these forces truly holds sway over the World of Darkness?

Obviously, mages exert a tremendous control over reality through magick and sheer will. They provide living examples, then, that free will is the dominant force of the universe. Yet rumor suggests that the Oracles of Time know something about the eventual fate of all humanity, including mages. How much free will does humanity have, then, if even the weavers of the Tapestry dance on predetermined threads?

Putting the question of mages aside, the same question can be asked about the Sleepers. Do they control their lives, or are they mere marionettes whose strings are manipulated by Awakened puppeteers? If the latter is true, then mages themselves have taken the roles of the Three Fates — spooling out, weaving, and cutting the lifelines of lesser mortals. The personal dilemma of Norna Weaver and the tragic ends of her parents should cast a human light across an abstract concept that players might otherwise choose to ignore.

For both mundane and mage, this argument is subsumed by the Nature versus Nurture debate. People like to think that personality and choice determine their actions. Yet some psychologists suggest that biological imperatives such as self-preservation and sexual drives are stronger subliminal motivations. Is reality, then, shaped by free will, destiny, or some combination of the two? This story should raise probing questions without supplying simple answers.

As a roleplaying story, **Loom of Fate** takes a stand on this issue by default. It presents free will as stronger than fate. Though the story taunts players into seeing destiny everywhere, their decisions do make a difference. At the end, they must ultimately choose between sacrificing Norna Weaver and helping to change her "fate."

As Storyteller, your goal is to goad player mages into believing in predestination while also allowing their choices to affect the story — a daunting challenge indeed! The story itself presents some ways to accomplish this; other hints follow in "Guidelines For Nonlinear Stories," given below.

One possible method would be the rigorous enforcement of roleplaying that conforms to Nature and Essence; this will give the impression that a character's actions are out of that player's hands. While this might underline the point of the story, it might also anger your players.

Another tactic could be "coincidental" prods that spur the characters along a certain path. Are these events true coincidences, or is there a stronger hand (other than that of the Storyteller) guiding these events?

Whatever you do, do not force the players along too many routes that they would not have otherwise chosen. Let your players feel the pull of destiny while allowing them to make their own decisions. Players who feel like rats pushed through a maze will just get upset.

A note about searching for someone through Correspondence or Mind magick: **the searcher must still know just whom he seeks!** The ability to extend one's perceptions does not give a mage the ability to locate anyone instantly. A similar rule applies to Correspondence travel. The mage must still know exactly where she is going. A mistake (i.e., a failed roll) could have disastrous consequences. Difficulties for Co-locating or Mind-sensing should be high (8 or 9) in a large city.

While on the subject of theme, it might be helpful to discuss the meaning of this story's title. It refers to the work of Cob, and by extension, all of San Francisco. Cob weaves the local pattern web, and with it the fates of all who live in San Francisco. The city has its own character, which influences its inhabitants as much as they create it. This give-and-take is known by some as the "resonance" effect. Both Cob and the city's mortal inhabitants weave the

Loom of Fate together, though few, if any, ever realize this. Your cabal can explore the theme of the story through this metaphor.

Mood

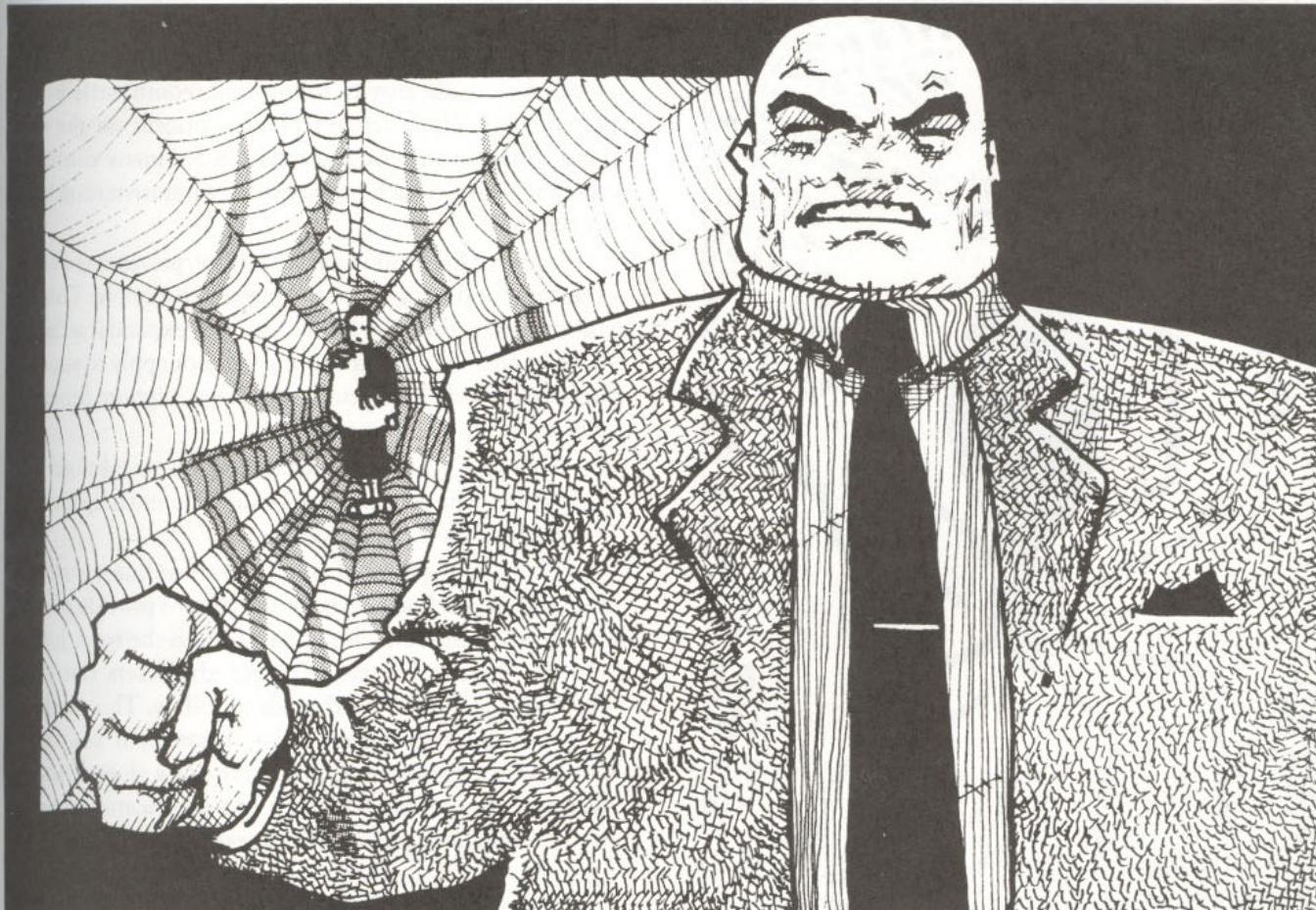
*Your cries of agony, where will they not reach?
Where on Citaeron will they not re-echo?
No man living
Will meet a doom more terrible than yours.*

— Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

For the most part, the Storyteller should maintain a mood of tragedy — tragedy in the classical sense rather than the popular conception. The usual connotation of tragedy is simple sadness and loss. The classical definition of tragedy, however, is a character's inevitable downfall caused by a personal shortcoming — a "fatal flaw."

Whose fatal flaw shapes the fate of Norna Weaver? Is it the hubris of the Technocracy and Marauders? Could it be the player characters, crossing the paths that destiny has laid and possibly interfering in the process by their actions? Or is the flaw within Norna herself, as she flees or embraces a seemingly predetermined end?

Two ways to highlight this tragic end are foreshadowing and suspense. Chapter Three of Mage presents some thoughts on foreshadowing. Suspense can fall into two categories. The first type provokes intellectual curiosity.





10 Loom of Fate

Madame Cleo's fortune-telling hints at future events and hopefully makes players anxious. The second type prompts emotional involvement through feelings of imminent danger. **Loom of Fate** as a whole hints at the destruction of San Francisco. Stress this terrible fate to keep your players moving.

Norna Weaver is very much aware of her impending fate; her Demeanor reflects this. During the story's course, the player-character mages realize that their own futures hold many unpleasant experiences.

Guidelines for Nonlinear Plots

*Time is a train
Makes the future the past
Leaves you standing in the station
Your face pressed up against the glass.
— U2, "Zoo Station"*

Many of the events in **Loom of Fate** hinge upon whether or not Norna Weaver is captured by the Technocracy, and, if she is, where and when. Rather than assuming she will be grabbed regardless of the players' actions, we have presented a variety of options for the Storyteller to pursue, with contingencies for many different circumstances. This section discusses three methods for promoting nonlinear plots in this and other stories.

Many published stories seem too linear. Others are so vague that the need for Storyteller preparation defeats the purpose of a "store-bought" story. The paradox is this: more detailed plots are easy to follow and require little work to prepare, but often restrict player options; on the other hand, plot outlines offer guidelines for many contingencies, but require much preparation or improvisation from a Storyteller.

Loom of Fate follows a third route, presenting a variety of settings and options for the players to explore. This way, you may guide the story immediately or expand it as desired. Many of the scenes in this book will not apply to your tale; they are provided as options to follow or ignore depending on your group's course of action.

Experience has shown that most games take odd turns during play. The following guidelines should help make the Storyteller's life a little easier.

The first method of promoting nonlinear stories — one used in this book — is for the plot to provide multiple exits from each scene. Imagine a fork in the road. Just as a traveler chooses her path, player characters can decide which of the many plot threads to follow. This method is crude but easy to prepare. For instance, if your mages investigate a crime scene, plant five or six clues. They may overlook some or fail to realize the significance of others, but the remaining clues will present further avenues of

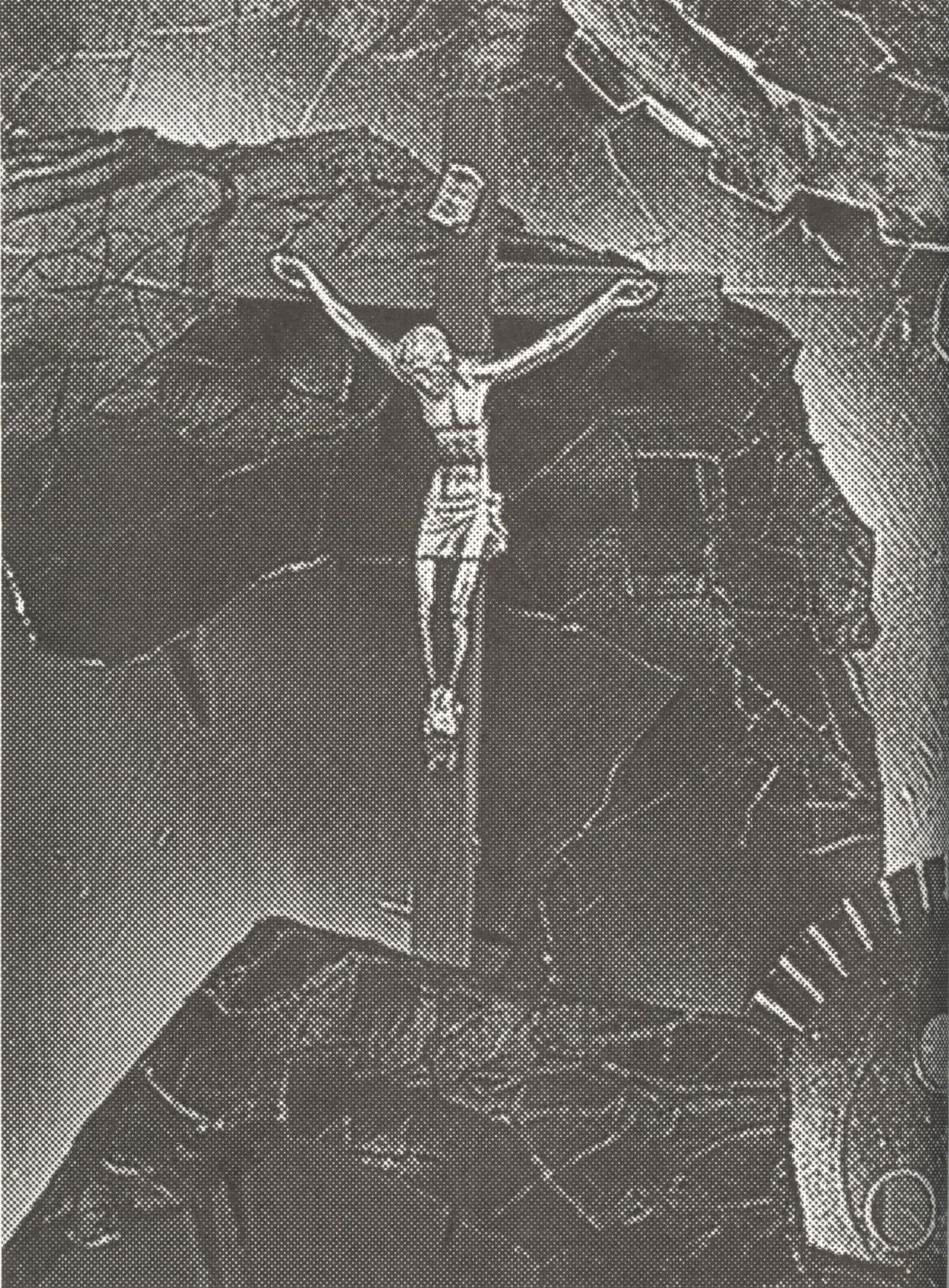
investigation. When improvising such choices, avoid yes/no options; a "no" usually spells an end to the story.

For a second method, simply allow players to follow their fancies off on some weird tangent. Even if these wanderings lead nowhere, indulge them for a while. Avoid saying "Don't bother breaking into Dr. Himiitsu's home; you'll find no clues there." Instead, improvise the scene. Not only will players worry about missing important (though imaginary) clues, but they could influence the story in remarkable ways. What if Dr. Himiitsu discovers them rifling through his personal papers? Does he call the police, take care of them with magick, or try to recruit them? Your cabal will decide!

If you are not confident with improvisation, relocate important information or change an entire scene. For

instance, one scene is set in Lincoln Cemetery; if the mages investigate another graveyard, you might use that one instead.

This brings us to a final point. "Linear" does not necessarily refer to set locations and predetermined events. Rather, it means allowing players' actions to affect the plot in a single given direction. Loom of Fate may be run in a linear fashion if the Storyteller desires. If the players miss an event, take this into account and continue down your predetermined course. Perhaps they hear about the event later, or see its effects. If they miss something integral to the story, integrate it later. Or don't. Characters can and should fail occasionally, although their failures should mean something to the chronicle. By the same token, reward success. Player characters are the story's protagonists; their choices should make a difference.



Chapter One: All Hollow's Eve

*Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
like Foolish Prophets forth; their words to scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopp'd with dust.*

— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXIX

This chapter introduces a number of plot threads. While seemingly separate, all of these threads juxtapose by the story's conclusion.

By means of a mysterious business card (and perhaps other strange occurrences), the player mages are drawn to San Francisco. There, several bizarre encounters — the least of which is a chaotic traffic accident — suggest that trouble is brewing. The most obvious cause of this trouble is a girl named Norna Weaver, who exudes magickal

power. Spurred by curiosity, the mages pursue Norna, either to chastise her for misuse of magick or to see that she is safe. The characters discover that she is an Orphan, unaware of her power's true nature. Furthermore, she is hunted by mysterious Men in Black and haunted by visions of a horrible fate.

This fate, unfortunately, also seems to include the player-character mages — at least, if one believes the readings of a fortuneteller!

Scene One: Three Weird Sisters



Plot

No matter where they live, despite any Arcane they maintain, all the mages somehow acquire parchment-colored business cards: Written on the reverse of each card, in cramped calligraphy, is the message, "I shall see you at dusk, on All Hallow's Eve." Hopefully, the very nature of this invitation prompts mages to visit San Francisco, if they do not already live there. Additional motivation depends upon character personality and your chronicle style; perhaps they intend to prove Madame Cleo a charlatan, or know her to be a true mage and seek advice.

If this is not enough, bait other hooks. Over the next couple of months, introduce other reasons to visit San Francisco. Some examples:

- Those who maintain a facade of normalcy might have to visit a sick relative or take a business trip.
- One character might be lucky enough to win a trip for two (or more) to "exotic San Francisco, gateway to the Orient!"
- A Disciple of Time feels a sense of foreboding emanating from the West Coast.
- As a last resort, a patron or Mentor asks them to "go west, young mage." He may have a legitimate reason or simply feel that such a trip would be for the best....

Coincidence? Not in the World of Darkness. Tempt players into this story, but try not to railroad them.

Besides these key developments, player mages may pursue a number of other subplots. The impending accident allows them to explore their feelings toward Sleepers (i.e., are they worth saving?) and perhaps begin a pattern of either static or dynamic magick-use. Rescue attempts may make them heroes.

Setting

*I can see lights in the distance
Trembling in the dark cloak of night
Candles and lanterns are dancing, dancing
A waltz on All Souls Night.*

— Loreena McKennitt, "All Souls Night"

This scene begins wherever you have set your chronicle. If the characters do not already dwell in San Francisco, travel there might be accomplished via magickal teleportation (Correspondence 3 or 4) or more mundane means. If the latter, you might do some research or calculation — cost of airfare, mileage on highways, length of the trip in hours, etc. — to add realism. You could even make the travelogue a scene unto itself.

MADAME CLEO VERTHANK

Old World Oracle

* *Fortunes Told*

* *Fates Revealed*

* *The Gift Deck Is Never Wrong*

Tempest's Eye

Hyde Street Pier

San Francisco

No Telephone

On the evening of October 31st, mages cross downtown San Francisco on their way to meet the mysterious fortuneteller, Madame Cleo. Remnants of evening fog roll through the concrete valleys below Nob Hill. While traveling north on Taylor, they pass the aluminum-paneled Hilton Hotel, apartments in Classical and Revivalist styles, and Victorian townhouses framed by wrought-iron tracery. Some of the smaller buildings, such as clubs and theaters, boast Spanish-style roofs or architectural spillover from nearby Chinatown.

The streets are full on All Hallows Eve. Children disguised as monsters and Ninja Turtles roam the sidewalks playing trick-or-treat. Concerned parents hover nearby. The Wyld seethes beneath the mild facade of order. Here, two punks fight over the right to smash a jack-o'-lantern; there a leper seeking spare change first begs, then assaults a hippie. The street scene overloads all five senses: dense but speeding traffic; honking horns and squealing tires; the thick taste of vehicle exhaust; a feeling of claustrophobia. Characters may hear the following message from a nearby TV or radio.

"...no comment. Now lets check in with Merika Seth, reporting live from Taylor and California. Merika?"

"Thanks, Bob. From this vantage, I suggest all you listeners avoid the downtown entirely. Even the normally clear Taylor Street is crammed with vehicles spilling over from the gridlock on Grant Avenue. The traffic situation is partially due to a final surge of rush-hour traffic and crowds of trick-or-treaters. But mostly we can blame this afternoon's World Series win by our Giants over the Oakland A's. I think everyone agrees that the exciting result of this six-game series was well worth its delay."

"And those quakes which damaged the two stadiums earlier this month are all the excitement Mother Nature's given us. This last day of October ends with the average temperature of 61 degrees Fahrenheit. For tomorrow, I predict more exciting weather — thunderstorms and lots of rain for the first week of November."

The first newscaster, Bob, cuts back in. "And we all know Merika's forecasts have never been wrong. That's Weather and Traffic, here on KWLF. Next...."

Characters reach the intersection of Taylor and California in time to see the weather lady wrapping up her report. A red and green cable car runs slowly east, up Nob Hill, pulled by its endless steel cable. Amid apartments and hotels towers Grace Cathedral, its strange architectural style best described as "Gothic in Reinforced Concrete." Its rose windows illuminate the dusk.

Drama: The Accident

As characters approach the intersection of Taylor and California, reality begins to unravel. Each character must roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 4) and consult the following table:

During this initial event, chaos continues to escalate. Make this accident worthy of a high-budget action movie — that is, totally unrealistic. When players roll, introduce complications on results of only one or two successes.

Botch: The mage's mind is elsewhere, but she is jarred back to reality by impact with a car. She does not gain the benefit of a dodge roll, but can still roll for soak (see details in main text). A more alert companion could possibly push her out of the way or affect the car via magick.

Failure: Same as above, but she may still make a last-minute dodge (difficulty 8).

One success: She sees nothing but the obvious — that described above. She may also dodge the car hurtling toward her (difficulty 7).

Two successes: The character notices a Honda Prelude swerve toward her and may dodge (difficulty 6).

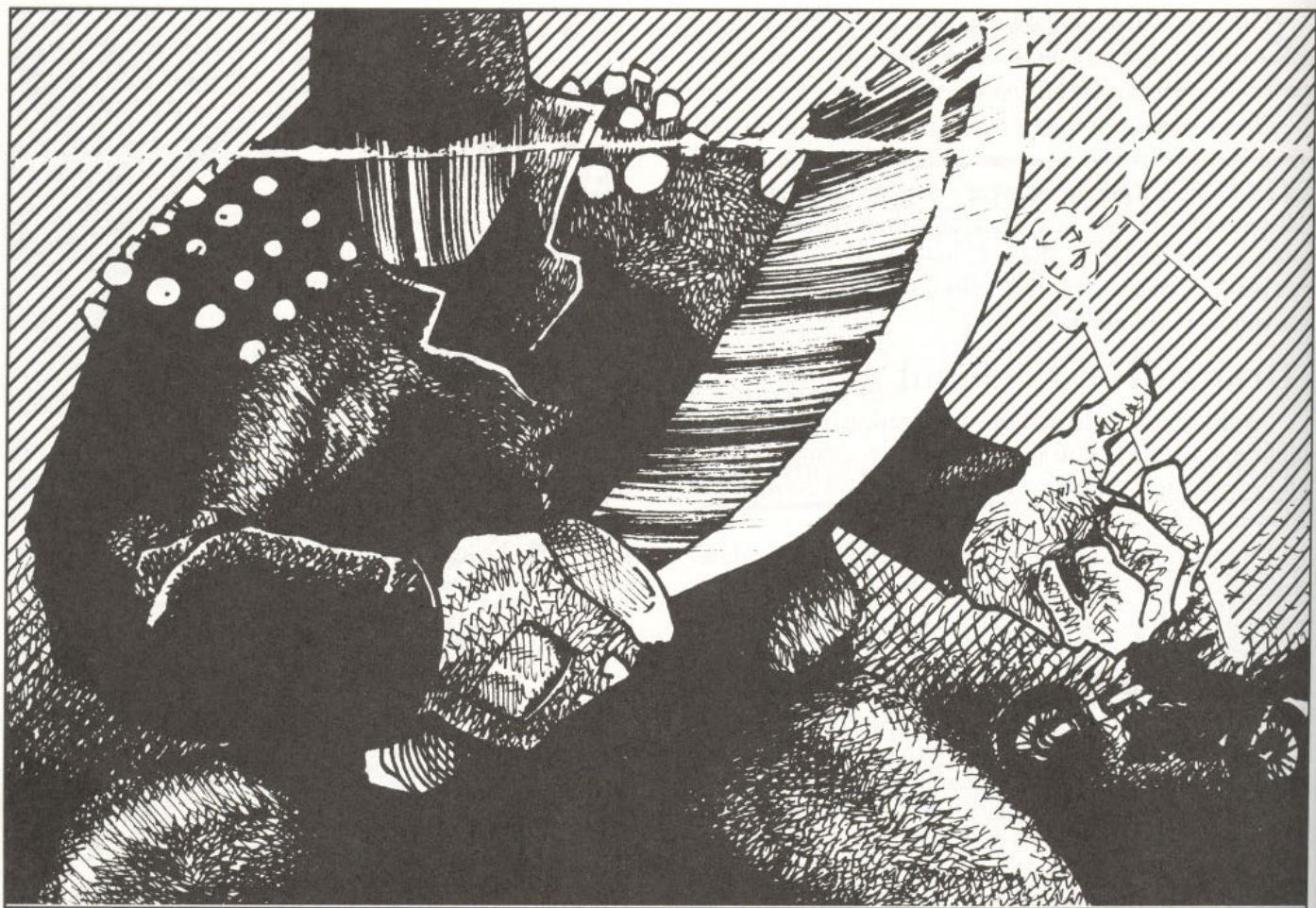
Three successes: The oncoming Honda swerves to avoid a girl (Norna Weaver) who hopped off a cable car in the middle of traffic. The character may dodge (difficulty 5).

Four successes: All traffic signals at the intersection show green or "walk." A character with at least one Sphere in Entropy realizes the malfunctioning signals and brake failures are caused by magick — Entropy magick emanating from Norna Weaver. The character may dodge the approaching car (difficulty 4).

Five successes: A character with Entropy 2+ is so alert she can attempt to minimize the randomness and bring chance back into balance. Otherwise, she may dodge (difficulty 3).

To dodge, roll Dexterity + Dodge (or Dexterity + Drive if in a vehicle). Each success reduces damage by one Health Level; zero damage indicates complete safety. Base damage from a collision is one Health Level for each 10 mph of the offending vehicle (assume a 40 mph speed limit). Seat belts add three dice when soaking impact damage.





Perhaps the driver swerved to avoid the Honda, only to bear down on Norna Weaver... and the car's brakes fail! Meanwhile, the Honda strikes Merika Seth (the radio reporter). Vehicles and pedestrians tragically mingle. A petroleum truck skids into two streetlamps near Huntington Cemetery, and sparks threaten to ignite the fuel. Norna reels in horror at the chaos that she has inadvertently caused, and flees the scene, dodging around a corner and disappearing from view.

Right-thinking mages can prevent many fatalities. Players will undoubtedly imagine magickal effects to save themselves and others. Disciples of Correspondence might augment dodge rolls with coincidental magick; each success reduces damage by one level. They might also use vulgar magick (Sphere 3) to teleport out of the way. Forces magick can siphon a car's kinetic energy (Sphere Rank Four; three successes), while Matter magick can reduce a car's mass.

The Marauders Ride!

Just as the mages gain control of the situation (assuming that they do!), introduce this final element. Mages with Rank Two or higher in the Spirit Sphere feel as though they are being watched. Mages with a Perception + Alertness Dice Pool of five or more dice automatically sense the bass rumble of idling engines. Give alert characters a few seconds to ready themselves. Suddenly, everyone hears the

roar of motorcycles, and a dozen cyclists zoom from amidst the wreckage, bearing nightmarish riders — Marauders! They fly across sidewalks, scattering children and rubber-necks as they circle in search of Norna Weaver. The presence of so many mages baffles the Marauders' magick-sense. One Marauder rides up to the character with the greatest Avatar rating and just sits there, staring through a blank, dented visor.

Characters might take this opportunity to evaluate their opponents. A mage with Awareness 3+ might try to read auras (Perception + Awareness; difficulty 9); any successes send his mind reeling with alien thoughts and lunatic emotions. The ensuing psychic headache adds one to the difficulties of all Mental rolls until eight hours of sleep have passed. An Intelligence + Cosmology (or Dream) roll (difficulty 6), will identify these cyclists. One success supplies the name "Marauder"; further successes provide additional details (see p. 34 of *Mage: The Ascension*).

The staring Marauder finally realizes this mage is not Norna. He suddenly breaks off and rejoins the gang. After circling the intersection a few times, the cyclists scatter to the four winds from this intersection. They easily lose pursuers (by slipping through space and spirit).

After the accident, a mage, possibly one with the Influence Background, finds herself interviewed by Merika Seth for KWLF. (Intelligence + Alertness (difficulty 7) allows the mage to note that the radio reporter seems quite

healthy despite her apparent "incident"; the Honda, however, sports a nasty dent.) Questions may include: "Your name, sir?"; "And your occupation?"; "By what chance did you find yourself here, at California and Taylor?"; "Did you see what caused the accident?"; and perhaps, "What made you risk your own life to save another?" The odd tone of her questions may make the characters suspicious, as well they should be.

Unless characters swiftly flee the scene, the police will detain them as witnesses.

Aftermath

Although characters may pursue a number of options from here (including a visit to the hospital), they will probably pursue Norna Weaver. If they don't, prompt them with an Intelligence + Intuition roll (difficulty 6). This leads to Scene Two.

Other options include:

- Continuing on to meet with Madame Cleo. See Scene Three.
- Hanging around the accident site in search of further clues. This leads to Scene Six.
- Following Merika Seth to determine how she survived her "near hit" with an automobile. Refer to Scene Thirteen.

Scene Two: Daughter of Time



Plot

What Is Going On?

Norna has been troubled of late by a nagging feeling of doom. Her foreboding quickly surpassed normal adolescent angst, finally becoming a full-blown panic. She needed to talk to someone, and soon, to reassure herself that she was still sane.

But where could she go? She had few acquaintances and no real

friends. Then she had remembered Reverend Williams of Grace Cathedral. Though Norna herself had not been to service in years, her mother had remained faithful. The reverend had even visited the house once or twice. Reverend Williams was the only one she could trust — he would listen; he would help. This sudden, powerful compulsion to speak to Reverend Williams drew her to the cathedral.

Traveling across town, Norna felt eyes watching her. She sidetracked frequently, but the farther she walked, the more frightened and frantic she became — as if she were not fleeing from something, but toward it. She hopped a cable car for the last dozen blocks. She almost laughed with relief when Grace Cathedral loomed into view...and then she saw the black Cadillac following her cable car — a nightmare icon brought to life through her fears.

Tempting fate, she jumped from the moving cable car and ran through traffic. Her subconscious reacted, spewing magick in a desperate attempt to create a diversion. And a diversion was sorely needed. The Men in Black were following her; the Marauders were watching her; the player mages almost ran into her; and all the while, someone has been waiting for her — someone in a position of trust....

This is where the mages become involved. To follow Norna Weaver from the accident scene, mages must make extended Perception + Investigation rolls (difficulty 7), accumulating five successes. Crashing vehicles, Marauders and media coverage may complicate the chase (see Scene One). Norna, meanwhile, takes refuge in Grace Cathedral.

Reverend Williams is a secret agent of the Technocracy. Like many Technomancers in San Francisco, he has received orders to abduct Norna Weaver. If necessary, he calls upon "Spirits of Heaven" (pattern spiders) or Men in Black — to aid him.

Setting

Grace Cathedral is an impressive blend of tradition and modernity. The gilded bronze doors on its east entrance were taken from casts of Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise on the baptistery in Florence. One portal lies ajar, indicat-

ing that Norna threw it open. Once players step inside, cavernous emptiness swallows the clamor of city streets.

Tiers of stained glass extend along the cathedral's length, rising to the roof groins. High above the hanging chandeliers, fan vaults support the ceiling like Masonic spiderwebs. Mages who make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) feel uneasy — and well they should, for the bishop of the diocese, Reverend John Williams, has defected to the Technocracy.

At first, the cathedral seems deserted. Empty pews stand in orderly rows. An organ boasting 7000 pipes lies silent in its balcony. No priest is in sight. A dancing luminescence draws vision to the apse, where thousands of candles flicker from niches and candelabras, and a dozen hanging braziers defuse incense. Celestial Chorus mages realize these trappings are part of a ceremony to ward off spirits. Other mages may learn this by means of Rank One Spirit magick or a roll of Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6; three successes).

In the World of Darkness, the Gauntlet weakens on All Hallow's Eve, allowing spirits to manifest more easily. Halloween costumes, jack-o'-lanterns, and gifts of food descend from magick practiced during the Mythic Age to frighten off or appease these spirits.

The player characters hear voices nearby. A Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 4) or a thorough search of the cathedral leads to a pilgrimage choir behind the apse. The voices — one male, one female — issue from a confessional.

The Judas Goat

Norna and Reverend Williams sit in the confessional, separated by a partition. Their discussion is outlined below. How much characters hear depends on when they arrive and how long they eavesdrop (perhaps requiring a Dexterity + Stealth roll; difficulty 5). Give the characters the benefit of the doubt — Williams has taken his time to gain Norna's trust and has no reason to expect visitors.

"I think that I'm going crazy, Father," says Norna. "I can't breathe. I feel like I'm suffocating...it's like something gigantic is weighing down on me...."

Reverend Williams cuts in: "You're just going through normal teenage difficulties. I see many young people like you, tormented by feelings of doom. I think that it comes from our society, the way we have been raised to believe that the end is just around the corner. Relax, Norna; all of this will pass."

Again, Norna is quiet, as if debating her next words. Then she blurts out, "It goes a lot further than that, Father Williams! Today I imagined my mother dead, and I'm worried...."

"I'm sure that this is nothing, Norna, nothing to be worried about at all." Williams finishes by reassuring Norna that her mother is safe, but very likely worried. He says he will go telephone her.

In fact, Reverend Williams is leaving to call Dr. Himiitsu at the U.C. Medical Center (tracing this call requires a Correspondence 2, Forces 1 magick roll; difficulty 5, three successes needed). While Williams is gone, the mages can talk with Norna.

She speaks only to those who pique her curiosity (Appearance + Leadership, difficulty 5, two successes). Those who fail receive a sarcastic response: "I saw you arrive," she says through the confessional door. "Don't talk to me. The longer you remain near me, the more you're certain to lose." Norna vaguely remembers the mages from a vision — one that ends in suffering. She is uncertain if they will help or hurt her.

Total acceptance will take time and extended Charisma + Expression rolls (difficulty 6, 10 successes needed; each roll simulates two minutes of talk). Mages sharing similar philosophies face less difficulty; refer to the Hollow Ones Tradition in Chapter Six of *Mage*. Those faring poorly quickly realize it, as Norna subconsciously employs magick. Watches and other mechanical trappings break down, clothing rots, and people suffer the effects of Delion's Haze (Entropy 2, Time 3). Even if Norna befriends the mages, she is unlikely to leave the cathedral quite yet.

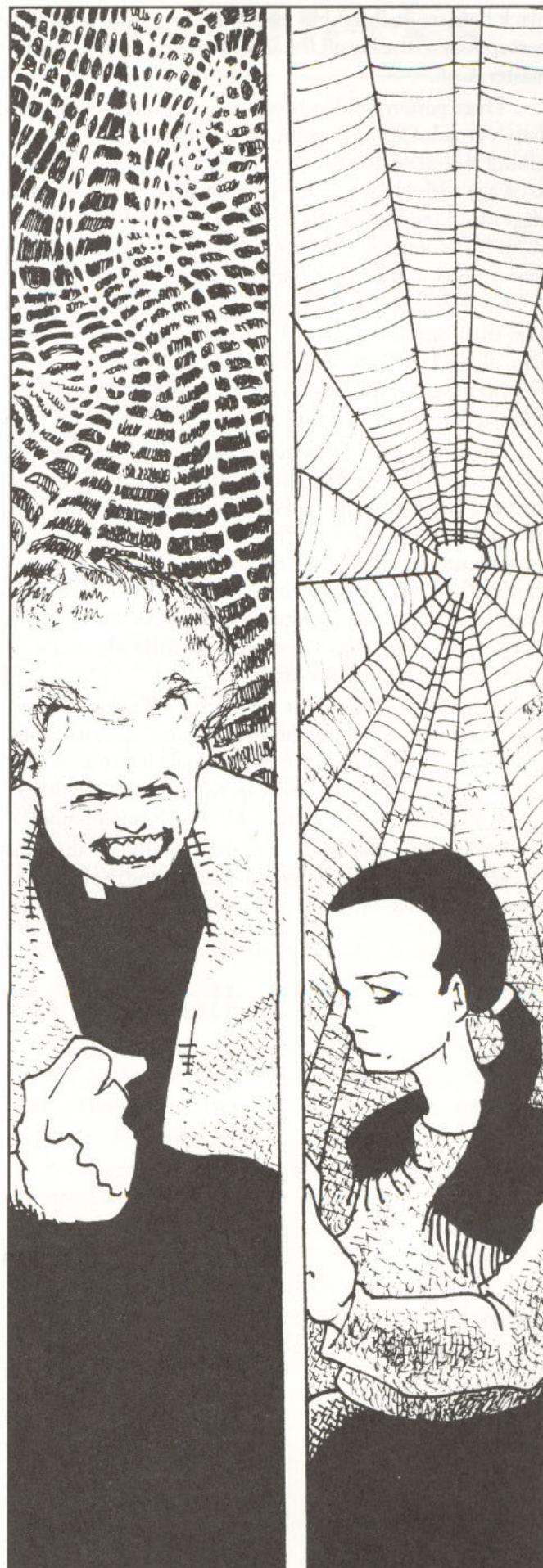
Reverend Williams returns at a dramatically appropriate moment. He greets strangers with cautious curiosity, maintaining a facade of respectability for as long as possible. Taking Norna aside, Williams explains that her mother is fine; nothing has happened to her. In fact, she is driving over right away to pick her up.

At this Norna blanches. "But our car is in the shop!" she blurts. The good reverend tries to cover for his mistake, but it becomes increasingly difficult for him to keep Norna in the cathedral, especially if players take advantage of his faux pas. The difficulty of the above Charisma + Expression roll lowers to 3! If ten successes are gained, Norna follows the mages' advice.

If confronted with violence or the possibility that Norna will slip from his grasp, Williams undergoes a sudden, vicious transformation. His pleasant face contorts with rage and he leaps atop the altar. Losing his temper and civilized demeanor, he shouts, "How dare you profane the House of my Lord and Master? For this, He will bind you in eternal fetters and drain your very essence! Then you will beg for forgiveness and release. May Cob have mercy upon you!"

Drama

With these final words, Reverend Williams throws up his arms and looks to the vaults. (A Perception + Alertness roll, difficulty 6, allows the characters to notice that as the sleeves of Williams' robes slip down his arms, tufts of rigid



black hair are visible.) His eyes glaze over as he shifts his perceptions to the Near Umbra and calls upon agents of his master, Cob.

Three pattern spiders hear the summoning and immediately attack. During the spiritual assault (which characters cannot see unless they peer into the Umbra), Williams tries to escape with Norna. In the unlikely event that all player mages are immobilized, Williams snatches Norna and takes off in his "company car," a green Volvo. As soon as the characters gain the upper hand, four Men in Black arrive.

Characters hear loud but distant footsteps echoing from the front of the nave. Turning around, they see four men, dressed in black, standing no more than a yard away. The Men wear mirrorshades, black suits with crisp white shirts, fedoras, and raincoats.

One Man in Black flashes a badge (a Wits + Law roll, difficulty 6, allows a mage to realize that it is fake) and "requests" that the mages leave. Though the Men in Black will make veiled threats, they do not attack unless the players initiate combat. At that point, they simply draw and fire their pistols, never seeking cover and never registering pain. During the confrontation, Reverend Williams tries to grab Norna. She does not go willingly and may escape at the Storyteller's discretion.

If characters overpower the Men in Black, the creatures disintegrate before the mages can question them. Their clothes contain no IDs or personal effects, save one; a neatly folded sheet of foolscap reading: "752 Ashbury Street, (415) 555-1357" (this is Norna's home number).

If the player mages and Reverend Williams' minions are evenly matched, Norna will slip out during the confrontation, frightened by everyone's unhealthy interest in her.

If the pattern spiders and Men in Black are clearly losing, Reverend Williams will escape and pursue Norna.

Aftermath

If Norna escapes the reverend's clutches, she may meet up with the players outside the cathedral after the fight, or simply disappear into the night, depending on the direction that the Storyteller wants the adventure to take. In any event, she may later be found at her father's grave (Scene Seven).

The mages have stumbled upon an intriguing plot. If they choose to keep their appointment with Madame Cleo, see Scene Three. If Norna is still with them, she will want to go. If Norna is abducted, persistent mages may follow up on a number of leads:

- If they befriend Norna, a visit to her home may be in order. Norna eventually takes comfort in a group of protectors. Even without Norna's guidance, the characters could arrive at the Weaver household by means of the address found on a Man in Black. In either case, refer to Scene Six.
- If Reverend Williams abducts Norna, the mages might still give chase. Depending on the level of subtlety, use Shadowing or Stunt Driving rules. Dense traffic, fog, and approaching darkness make pursuit problematic (difficulty 8). Williams' destination—the U.C. Medical Center—lies between five and 15 minutes distant, depending on his haste. As a last resort, a Rank Three Correspondence effect could locate Norna after a 24-hour search through All-Space. The U.C. Medical Center is described in Scene Fourteen; the secret Progenitor lab is described in Scene Fifteen.

- Scene Four covers a plethora of general inquiries, from the identities of Men in Black to the importance of Norna Weaver.

Scene Three: Between Decks



Plot

Madame Cleo Verthank, the fortuneteller whose invitation began this story, is in fact a true mage. A Master of Time, she has foreseen certain elements of the characters' fate and warns them by means of a Tarot-like reading. Though she will refuse to alter the fate of the city by direct intervention, she can continue to provide vague and subtle guidance throughout the chronicle.

Setting

By now, the first few stars have appeared in the darkening sky. They soon disappear as characters descend though the bank of fog concealing the wharf. The smells of salt and fish permeate the air.

On their way to Hyde Street Pier, mages pass galleries, landscaped plazas, seafood restaurants and abandoned warehouses. The entire district flourishes beneath the hedge of skyscrapers that keeps San Francisco from spilling into the Bay.

The pier itself is a western extension of Fisherman's Wharf, bracketed between Aquatic Park and the Embarcadero Freeway. Out on the bay, dozens of campfires blaze on Alcatraz Island. The Tempest's Eye, a 19th-century whaler, is moored on the wharf. It is an eccentric sight; multicolored flags and strings of Christmas lighting decorate its blunt simplicity. It floats peacefully in the dark waters, silent save for the snapping of a poorly lashed sail and the tinkling of bulbs. A sloping gangplank sags between wharf and deck.

The upper deck is flat and bare save for six overturned rowboats and a hatch leading belowdecks. The hatchway is pitch black. A light source is needed to navigate the narrow stairs safely. The last person down hears a shrill voice ask, "You will close the hatch, will you not?" Other characters hear only the squeaks and pattering of rats.

The stairs lead to a partial cabin, separate from the hold. It is crammed full of occult paraphernalia, old sea chests, fishing gear, bowls of rotting fruit, and other junk. In a relatively clear space sits an oak table, surrounded by chairs. There is one chair more than the total number of characters present, including Norna, but the cabin is otherwise empty. After the characters poke about for a few minutes, Madame Cleo emerges from the shadows, shadows that were empty but a moment earlier.

The Fortuneteller

Madame Cleo introduces herself and, before the characters can reply, introduces them as well! She says each name, followed by a brief catch phrase ("And you are Maggie Wrathward, nurse during light, insatiable succubus by night. Fortunate for you that burning at the stake is no longer fashionable!"). Only mages with strong Arcane ratings (4 or 5) can stump her.

Pushing aside a cracked crystal ball and a vase of dying poppies, Madame Cleo sits at the table and invites her guests to do likewise. She explains why she has invited them here: "Quite simply, I have seen something of your fates..." If Norna is present, Madame Cleo raises her eyebrows and says, "You, my dear, look forward to — and avert your eyes from — the future. Is that not right?"

Then she begins the card-reading, a convenient format for coincidental Time magick. Guidelines for this event are found in Appendix Two. As she reads, Madame Cleo passes each mage the card that she has drawn for him. As explained in Appendix Two, these cards are minor Talismans. When the reading is over, Madame Cleo cackles knowingly. "Fate or free will?" she asks. "Which is it, truly, that lays the Path?" So saying, the mystic fades away, taking her deck with her but leaving the gift cards behind.

After their meeting with Madame Cleo, characters climb abovedecks and open the hatch to a torrent of rain. Though stormclouds darken the sky, it is clearly day. Time has indeed flown; so quickly, in fact, that an hour has passed for every minute spent with the fortune-teller!

Aftermath

The recent card-reading may disturb some characters. These mages might look into the various permutations and possibilities of their fates. This is covered in Scene Four.

Here are other possible story paths:

- They could return to the accident site that began this story; see Scene Six.
- If Norna Weaver still accompanies them — or if they have an address to follow up on — the characters may visit 752 Ashbury Street; this leads to Scene Seven.
- The mages may remember Merika Seth's incredible survival during the traffic accident. Should they follow this lead, refer to Scene Thirteen.



Chapter Two: Discerning a Pattern

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument,
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door as I went in.*
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXX

The actions the mages take hereafter depend on Norna's fate in the cathedral. Did she escape? Was she taken? Is she with the characters? Norna will stick with the characters if they have thus far protected her from Reverend Williams, but she has a mind of her own. She voices her opinion about any subject that concerns her. If characters fail to act in Norna's best interest, she will leave them.

This chapter gives a variety of options for the characters to pursue. By now, the characters are probably dying to know what is going on. Many paths of inquiry may be followed. For answers, they can interview contacts, perform research, or comb the Near Umbra.

Meanwhile, events continue behind the scenes. One scenario has Norna still on the loose, rescued by the characters or on her own. Dr. Himitsu, the Progenitor seeking Norna, considers these new variables before formulating another plan. He instructs his agents to shadow the

mages (and Norna, if she is on her own). They must watch and wait, but not act — not yet....

A second scenario sees Norna abducted. The Technomancers hold her in their secret lab beneath the U.C. Medical Center. While Dr. Himitsu awaits the upcoming Symposium for approval, Norna's magick provides clues to her whereabouts (see "Norna" in Scene Four for details).

Scene Four presents a number of leads for curious characters to follow. If the players travel into the Near Umbra, Scene Five covers pertinent details. Scene Six describes the Weaver house. If the characters visit, with or without Norna, they will encounter some unpleasant surprises. In Scene Seven, Norna visits her father's grave. If the players have lost her, they will find her here. In Scene Eight, the gang of Marauders battles the player characters.

Scene Four: Lines of Investigation



This is not a regular scene. Rather, it compiles topics that mages may investigate over the course of the story. Depending on your chronicle style, you might improvise a number of mini-scenes to roleplay in full. For instance, a Dreamspeaker who contacts her Mentor should probably roleplay her requests (and roll Manipulation + Mentor to determine how much help he provides).

Lines of investigation are broken into subtopics.

Talking to Norna

If mages gain Norna's trust, she clears up a few mysteries. For the extent of her knowledge, see Norna's character description and parts of the Plot section in Scene Two. Characters who spend time with Norna may see through her Demeanor. A Perception + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 6) reveals that Norna needs an authority figure in her life...and also a friend.

Mages may wish to tap Norna's divining ability. Unfortunately, it works most freely during times of stress (e.g., just before an ambush). Sometimes, however, visions appear via dreams. Each night, roll her Wits + Meditation (difficulty 8); two successes allow her to make a Time magick effect roll. Norna remembers these bouts of pre- — or post- — cognition upon waking.

Mystic Individuals

The first few scenes introduced Marauders and Men in Black. Mages who have never before encountered them may wish to learn more. An Intelligence + Research roll (difficulty 7) made at a mystic library or Chantry garners the information found in the *Mage* rulebook (pgs. 34 and 50; 47 and bits of 282). The number of successes indicates the amount and accuracy of this information. Those lacking such facilities can instead roll Intelligence + Dream (to research Men in Black) or Intelligence + Cosmology (for Marauders). Remember to account for the Men in Black's Arcane rating by subtracting three dice.

Other subjects include:

- Norna Weaver: This requires that a mage search through public records. An Intelligence + Influence roll (difficulty 6) gains access to the mundane details of Norna's life — birth certificate, home address (see Scene Seven), school record and so forth. In effect, paraphrase some of the information found under Norna's description (Scene Two). The researcher also finds the death certificate of Norna's father and records of his burial in Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Eight).

Norna might be loose in San Francisco. A Perception + Streetwise roll (difficulty 9) or Correspondence magick could track her down, possibly just before Men in Black or Marauders show up. See Scenes Seven and Eight for Norna's likely hangouts.

If she has been abducted, only Rank Three Correspondence, a full-length investigation (the substance of this story), or pure coincidence will locate her. She is being held in a secret lab beneath the U.C. Medical Center (as described in Scenes Fourteen and Fifteen). One clue to her whereabouts is a news report about a serious blackout that strikes the Medical Center within an hour of her disappearance.

- Cob: Reverend Williams calls upon Cob when angry. This name comes up again and again throughout this story. If a mage wonders who Cob is, have her roll Intelligence + Cosmology (difficulty 6). Alternately, she can interview a spirit, in which case the roll becomes Manipulation + Awareness (difficulty 6). In either event, consult the table below.

- Technomancer Presence: Plans of the Technomancers should not be shared lightly. Only if your chronicle is one of espionage — where infiltrating the Technocracy is common — should you provide this avenue

Botch: The mage gleans false information, specifically: Cob is a powerful warlock of the Verbena Tradition. He often takes the form of a swan, stout horse or ear of corn.

Failure: She has never heard the word "Cob."

One Success: "Cob" sounds familiar. Though uncertain about its exact reference, she relates it to spirits.

Two Successes: Cob is a pattern spider residing in the Near Umbra corresponding to San Francisco. Characters who want more information must step sideways; see Scene Six.

Three Successes: Cob is the tremendously powerful pattern spider that rules San Francisco. This Umbrood actually built the city through its spiritual reflection. The mage knows the general location of Cob's lair (as detailed in Scene Sixteen).

Four Successes: Cob is more than a pattern spider; it is said to be the spiritual manifestation of San Francisco itself.

Five Successes: Cob is loosing cohesion, being torn apart by Wyld forces. When Cob is disrupted (the spiritual equivalent of death), it is said that San Francisco will also collapse.

of investigation. Maybe a Virtual Adept could learn something from hacker contacts. In these situations, a roll of Perception + Streetwise (difficulty 9) may uncover some facts. Three successes are needed to garner concrete information.

The specifics are left to you, but may include: news of an upcoming Symposium (perhaps even the time and place; see Scene Ten); that the Technomancers are seeking a band of Marauders; that they recently sought someone; perhaps a name or two; or the existence of a secret Progenitor lab.

- Other Traditions: Characters might seek fellow mages for advice, especially local representatives of their Tradition. A Perception + Etiquette roll (difficulty 6) contacts a mage of a friendly Tradition. You must determine how helpful this person is.

Work this encounter into the story. For instance, two Euthanatos could meet in Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Eight). A Virtual Adept might contact Merika Seth via a BBS without realizing to whom he speaks!

Other Tradition mages will be of limited assistance. While the players seek or guard Norna, the Marauders tear the city apart looking for her, and the Technocracy and Traditions try to limit the damage. The players may stumble across the aftermath of one or more of these peripheral battles before they cross the Marauders' path again in

Scene Eight. While the players may use Chantry libraries, they will not have access to any high-level help.

The Way Down, a large Hollow One Chantry, once occupied an abandoned church near the Bay. Unfortunately, the goth scene in San Francisco has waned in recent years, and the Hollow Ones, ever creatures of fashion, have moved the earthly manifestation of their Chantry elsewhere, leaving the Way Down a has-been club.

The Cult of Ecstasy maintains a Pleasuredome, called the House of Quodosch, in Berkeley. They keep a large modern library of the occult, but it is so disorganized that even the mage residents do not know how to find anything. C of E mages, Dreamspeakers, Verbena and Sons of Ether are welcome here. All other mages will be watched with curt disdain and shown the door as soon as possible.

Most Traditions believe that a mage of promise shall arrive near the turn of the millennium, bearing a powerful Avatar and destined for greatness. With proper guidance, this mage will help bring about something great. The specifics of this vary by Tradition. Some call it Reconciliation, others Ascension. Dreamspeakers may think of it as the Apocalypse.

If anyone suggests that Norna might be this mage, she will panic and flee at the first opportunity. At this point, she wants no such honor.



What the Future Holds

Disciples of Time may not be content to listen to others speak of fate, instead preferring to perform some divination of their own. Even the simplest Time magick reveals the fast approach of a temporal current carrying dozens — perhaps hundreds — of fates toward a maelstrom of possibility. The maelstrom centers on San Francisco.

A Rank Two Time effect determines the probable future of a person, place, thing, etc. The benefit here lies in focusing on a specific subject. Choose appropriate prophecies from the Tarot reading in Appendix Two, or invent your own. More successes indicate a higher degree of detail. Note, however, that the greater the detail, the more you have to manipulate future events. The difficulty of such divination is high (8 to 10) and the details should be vague.

Interpreting the Prophecies

Each mage leaves Madame Cleo's reading with a card representing his destiny. An Intelligence + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) or Prime magick effect reveals an enchantment. Three successes determine its function (in game terms).

A second puzzle lies in interpreting each vague prophecy. For the most part, let players do this themselves. Provides hints via Intelligence + Enigmas rolls (difficulty 8); each success gives one hint. Having narrowed down the meaning, the mages may now make other rolls to glean further information. For instance, mages determine that Card VIII, in the Future position, indicates a law office — but which one? An Intelligence + Intuition roll (difficulty 6) will narrow the search to, say, three possibilities (only one or two successes), or pinpoint Union Law (three or more successes).

Scene Five: The Umbrandscape



Plot

This scene is a general description of San Francisco's Umbra. If the mages have the means, they may search the Umbra for clues or step sideways to gain entry to certain places.

Setting

San Francisco's Umbra reflects a conflict between order and tradition on one side, bohemian chaos on the other. Quintessence, the spiritual byproduct of human habitation, has molded the Umbra in its origin's image. From the city's conservative "Victorian element" and the shaping of the Technocracy comes a tightly knit Pattern. However, this grid constantly shifts and seethes with chaos. The ground continually ripples, as if something were crawling just beneath the surface. Spirits of order and disorder scurry everywhere.

Most real-world streets have spiritual counterparts, but these have been pulled taut and arranged in an organized grid. Careful observers note that the longer roads radiate outward from some central point. Each paving stone is perfectly aligned with its neighbors; together, they form repetitive and hypnotic checkerboard patterns, except where gleeful Wyld Things have pulled cobbles up for projectiles. Though these roads are narrow and ill-lit, they seem safer than the "back lots." In the shadows, Wyld Things gnaw at structures.

There are no earthly buildings. Instead, the roads pass between towering obelisks, cubic structures and other geometric constructs. Over these creep wild, reddish vines, growing as fast as they are pruned. Large, multifaceted crystals hang suspended in the half-light, pulsating with a

dim fluorescence. Occasionally, a wormlike spirit-train slides through the streets, independent of cable or rail; its passengers press against viewports, shrieking silently, daring one to imagine their next stop.

The Pattern Web — a vast network of steel cables crisscrossing high above — binds and secures this region of the Umbra. Through its mesh, one sees the Horizon's perpetual twilight. Wyld Things and pattern spiders swarm everywhere. The Pattern Web is continually torn apart as fast as it is created or repaired.

Dozens of spirits travel back and forth on unknown errands. These spirits include pattern spiders, net-spiders (strings of computer data made conscious), and spirits of glass, steel, electricity and concrete. Odd Wyld Things swarm about.

Mages may converse with spirits via Rank Two Spirit magick. The reaction of approached spirits varies from helpfulness to hostility.

Travel

During this story, the mages may travel through the Umbrandscape. To navigate without help, mages must roll Wits + Cosmology (difficulty 6) each day. Three successes allow travelers to arrive at their destination with minimal hassle. A botch on this roll could be truly unpleasant....

If the mages have been guided by some information, they might pay a visit to one of three notable sites:

- Seth's Workshop: Stepping sideways near Merika Seth's apartment on the Diamond Heights will reveal a tiny Realm carved from the Tapestry. This pyramidal structure has no obvious entrances, but a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 8) or Rank One Matter effect reveals a concealed portal. A simple push dematerializes one block



for a turn. The interior is apparently a data vault, with dozens of filing cabinets lining each wall.

One drawer, labeled "Elements," contains a dozen computer files—personified in the Umbra by black manila folders—named for a variety of weather patterns. If the file is disturbed, several frantic elementals escape into the Umbra. Another drawer holds a file titled "Project: Reincarnate." Here the mages find a blueprint depicting the growth of a delicate, silver spider into a mechanical monstrosity (Norna's Avatar to a great pattern spider).

This workshop is the spiritual extension of a computer hard drive, a sort of Umbral MacPaint for Merika Seth. If Merika is working at her computer when characters arrive (Storyteller's discretion), she can use magick at the touch of a keystroke. Those who step sideways find themselves in her apartment. See Scene Thirteen.

- Cob's Lair: In the Near Umbra, the city-grid radiates from a central point — Cob's lair. This is the hub of most local activity. Pattern spiders continually return to receive orders or report progress.

Visitors are unwelcome, and are subject to attack by both pattern spirits and Wyld Things (Appendix One). If mages persist toward the center of the Pattern Web, they notice signs of disorganization. Paving stones are wobbly or missing. Cracks appear on some structures. The Pattern Web sags slightly. Construction crews keep busy, but their repairs seem shabby and piecemeal. The hill at the city's hub looks as if it was formed *after* the city's construction rather than before; it literally displaces the local streets. One imagines a giant tree root pushing upward — or a volcano forming....

A network of steel cables and mechanical wiring conceals Cob's lair. Here the mesh of the Pattern Web is most dense. For a look inside the webwork, see Scene Sixteen.

- GeneTech Lab: Just above Cob's web floats a huge polyhedron, apparently constructed from dull, white plastic and painted steel. The Pattern Web anchors the shape to it, like a balloon's mooring cables. Thick power cables dangle from the structure, disappearing into the web below. A few antennae probe the Umbra.

This edifice is actually the outer frontier of a Horizon Realm, the foundation for a Progenitor Construct known as GeneTech Lab. In the mundane world, this secret lab apparently exists below the U.C. Medical Center. Though most Portals open into physical reality, the Construct does have a spiritual "back door"; see Scene Fifteen.

Aftermath

Characters could slip through the Gauntlet anywhere. Those who forget to look before they leap sideways might land in some predicament — high-speed traffic, a formal dinner party, and so on. Specific destinations are outlined below.

- If mages recover pieces of a Marauder cycle left behind at the accident site in Scene One, they could possibly track these magickal bandits via a Rank Three Correspondence effect. Three successes are required. Each attempt takes one day. Scene Nine describes a melee with Marauders, possibly resulting from a successful track.

- Mages may slip sideways within Merika's workshop, returning to physical reality in her apartment. This is covered by Scene Thirteen.

- Should the characters attempt to enter GeneTech Lab, refer to guidelines in Scene Fifteen.

- Cob's lair is fully described in Scene Sixteen.

Scene Six: The Weaver Residence



*Go on and fly
Try everything
You'll be back
Sure as the gypsies sing, my darlin'.*

—Theories of the Old School, "Gypsy Spell"

If Norna still accompanies the players, she will want to check on her mother at home. If the characters are searching for her, they may get her address from one of the Men in Black. In any case, they arrive at the house to discover that Mrs. Weaver is alive! In truth, she is dead; the woman they meet is a Progenitor clone.

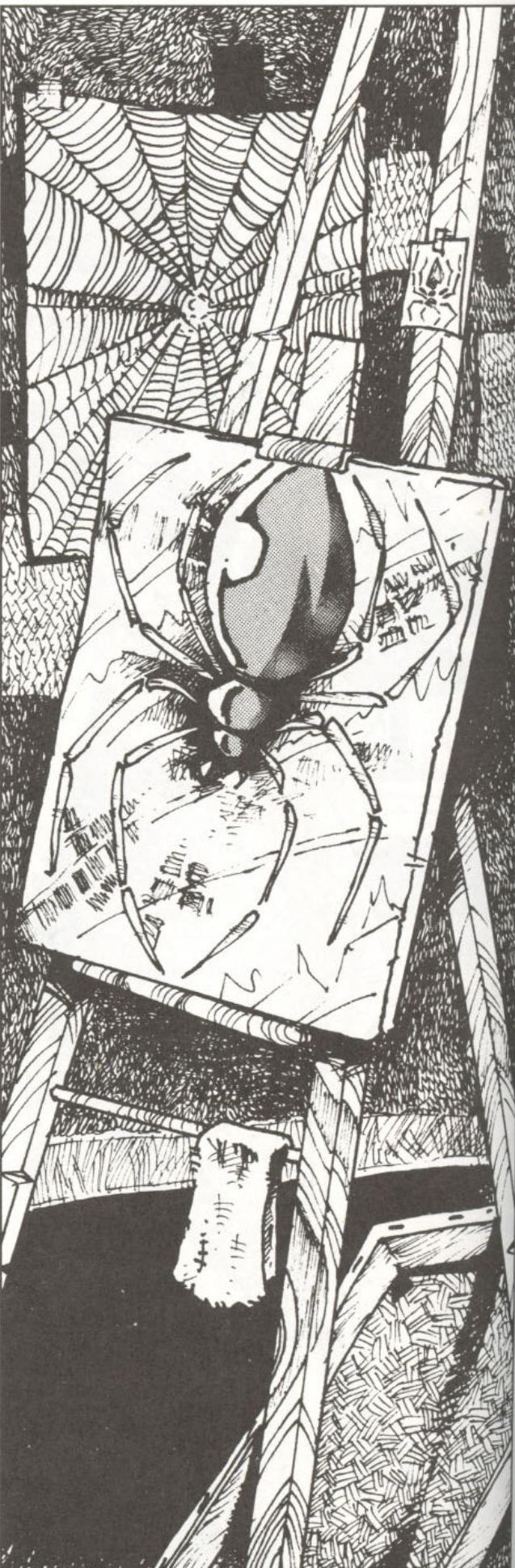
Plot

Dr. Himiitsu had ordered two Men in Black to watch the house. On the day this story began, they were to snatch her. When Norna failed to arrive home (see Scene Two), the Men in Black approached the house. Posing as federal agents, they asked a few meaningless questions while actually probing her thoughts for Norna's location. Mrs. Weaver was a strong-willed woman. When she suspected that something was wrong, she bolted. She did not get far.

The tragic irony is this: Mrs. Weaver would still be alive if Norna had not fled at the vision of her mother's death!

Dr. Himiitsu had not wanted to kill Mrs. Weaver, but had prepared for just such an occasion. His Progenitors had previously used stolen DNA samples to create an almost-perfect clone, dubbed Mrs. Weaver II. She had been with the Men in Black in case of trouble.

Hopefully, the mages uncover this doppelganger. They may then freely search the house, confirming the death of



Mrs. Weaver and finding yet another indication of how tightly their fates are bound to Norna's. If the mages drop off Norna (unaware of her peril), she is promptly kidnapped. Nevertheless, the story continues, introducing more ways for them to become involved.

Setting

Haight-Ashbury is an upper-middle-class residential district. Only in this district of San Francisco does one see such a collection of 19th-century homes. The richer residents maintain Queen Anne-style Victorians. The "poorer" dwellings showcase Italianate and Georgian styles of architecture. Scattered among these live-in museums are tasteful apartments, houses and flats. Except for the uneven landscape, parts of Haight-Ashbury resemble the London of 100 years ago.

If not for the lousy weather, one could imagine suit-clad gentlemen and parasol-protected ladies strolling along the walks. As it is, only a few trenchcoated figures trudge though the rain. Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 9) reveal these figures to be Men in Black, sent to spy on the mages. Nothing short of Correspondence magick will shake them; only Adepts of Correspondence can confront them. They seem content to watch, at least for now.

The Weaver residence at 752 Ashbury Street is a well-kept Victorian with a circular porch and single tower. At first glance, all seems safe. The door is closed, the drapes open. Lights shine from each window and a television stereo blares a newscast. If the mages knock or ring the door chimes, Mrs. Weaver answers after just enough time for them to think about breaking and entering.

If mages come alone, Mrs. Weaver is polite but aloof. She reluctantly agrees to talk with "officials"—Manipulation + Law (difficulty 6); each success allows one question—but has no time for reporters, salesmen or odd strangers.

If Norna accompanies them, Mrs. Weaver lets out a relieved gasp. "Oh, Norna!" she cries. "I've been so worried! Don't you ever do that again!"

Perceptive characters catch Norna's reaction: she is first startled, then relieved to see her mother alive. Yet she shows no further "weakness." After looking at one other for a few seconds, they both become aware of the mages. Norna explains how they helped her. Her mother thanks them in a tone that clearly indicates the conversation is at an end. Only if they show no signs of leaving does Mrs. Weaver invite them in for a drink. She attempts to get rid of the mages as quickly as possible without seeming overly rude.

Drama

This scene's drama involves penetrating the doppelganger's disguise. Afterward, the players might search the house. Possible discoveries follow.

- Disturbing Images: Norna's second-floor bedroom extends into the tower. Beside the normal trappings of a young girl, the most obvious feature is artwork hanging on walls, stashed away in drawers, and resting, half-finished, on easels. Paintings, sketches, embroidery, even photography are all represented. This is Norna's work: primitive yet promising. Those who examine the art may notice an arachnid motif, particularly silver and black spiders.

- Shades of Dr. Weaver: A search of the master bedroom turns up a hatbox on a closet's top shelf. It contains some of the late Dr. Weaver's possessions: a gold pocket-watch, his medical degree, a copy of the death certificate (died of a brain hemorrhage, age 42), records of the burial plot in Lincoln Cemetery, and a black-and-white photograph.

In this photo, Dr. Weaver holds a four-year-old Norna, stethoscope hanging about her neck. A large Oriental man enters a building in the background. An Intelligence + Alertness roll (difficulty 6) allows the viewer to recognize the distinctive architecture of U.C. Medical Center.

- Corpse in the Attic: If characters thoroughly search the attic, have them roll Perception + Investigation (difficulty 5). With even one success, they find the body of Mrs. Weaver, hastily hidden in a trunk in the cobwebbed attic.

Naturally, this discovery upsets Norna. Though she maintains an uncaring demeanor, bursts of destructive Entropy magick reveal her true emotions. Sympathetic characters should try to comfort her, rolling Charisma + Culture (difficulty 6, modified by roleplaying). Three or more successes send her into a healthy fit of crying and end the devastation.

- Postcognition: Focused properly, Rank Two Time magick reveals what went on here. This includes the location of Mrs. Weaver's body and the subsequent arrival of another Mrs. Weaver.

Aftermath

This scene provides few definite exits. The plot assumes that characters fall back on one of the story directions provided earlier. Also, the mages' actions may depend on Norna's wishes. She would like to visit her father's grave one last time. Mages who grant this request travel to Lincoln Cemetery, and Scene Seven.

- If mages seek Norna, they could check Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Seven). If she is still free, she will be there.

- By now, they may realize that the U.C. Medical Center plays some pivotal role. Should they investigate, refer to Scene Thirteen.

Scene Seven: R.I.P.



Plot

Characters might come to Lincoln Cemetery either at Norna's behest (if she accompanies them) or to look for the young Orphan (if she doesn't).

Here Norna stands by her father's grave, seeking comfort and inspiration in her time of crisis. She probably goes away disappointed...unless a Disciple of Spirit helps her contact the spirit of Dr. Weaver. Depending on the magicks employed, he either materializes as a ghost or possesses one of the mages. In any case, he relates his death at the hands of Dr. Himiitsu.

Before leaving the Cemetery, someone notices a black-garbed man slipping away between the headstones. Paranoid characters give chase, only to discover that he is a Sleeper attending a nearby funeral.

Setting

Lincoln Cemetery lies at the extreme northwest of San Francisco, on the Lobos headland. Mourners take little comfort in the rough, liquid-lead waves that beat and foam against the coast like rabid beasts. The beacon from Mile

Rock Lighthouse seems dim. Cypress trees line the landward edges, their scale-like leaves flapping in the stiff breeze. Though rain has stopped, dark clouds continue to blot out the sky.

Most of Lincoln Cemetery is devoted to grave-plots, mausoleums, and memorials, all segregated by nationality. On one vast plot in the Chinese section stands an elaborate tomb, replete with arches and temple dogs. If the mages have come looking for Norna, they find her standing by her father's grave, near the Chinese section.

Norna feels a bit lost. As her mundane life slips away, and the world of mages opens before her, she needs some time to orient herself.

"I've always seen the strangeness," she explains to no one in particular. "From the corner of my eye; from inside my head. But now I accept it as real. It's like I've awakened from a peaceful sleep...and entered a nightmare." If she has not already done so, this would be a good time for Norna to tell her life story.

Norna's father was her best friend. She wanted to say goodbye to this last and strongest link. This is an excellent cue for someone to intervene. A Spirit mage could summon the spirit of Norna's father. Even one success alerts the



spirit to the summoning! Dr. Weaver senses his daughter's presence and attempts to reach her. If an Adept of Spirit weakens the Gauntlet (two successes are enough, this being Halloween), Dr. Weaver slips through.

If the Gauntlet is too strong, Dr. Weaver attempts to possess the mind of a random person; he continues trying until he succeeds or runs out of targets. If the ghost succeeds, the host shudders for a second, then seems slightly disoriented. His bearing changes to a loose-limbed but dignified stance, with much gesturing and hand movement. When speaking, he has a different accent and vocabulary.

Take the player of the possessed character aside and coach him in his new role. Provide all the necessary information (see below) and let him go to it.

Dr. Weaver had noticed the unhealthy interest that his colleague Dr. Himiitsu had taken in Norna. Fearing the worst, he confronted Himiitsu, who assured Dr. Weaver that no such thing had crossed his mind. The argument gave Dr. Weaver a headache, and he went home. He died of a brain hemorrhage that night. He still believes that Dr. Himiitsu has a crush on his daughter, and fears for her safety.

Now the mages can ask specific questions; the Storyteller may use this opportunity to drop any clues she wants the players to have. Dr. Weaver is unaware of the Technocracy or its true interest in Norna. Dr. Weaver can only remain in physical reality for seven turns before being disrupted (assume a limit of seven question-and-answer exchanges). One thing he mentions in passing is that his wife has joined him: "We wait for you, Norna."

This dialogue ends when the spirit of Dr. Weaver fades from sight, or the "possessed" wants his body back.

Drama

To end this scene with dramatic flare, introduce a wild goose chase. Just before leaving Lincoln Cemetery, have each mage rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6). Those who succeed notice a black-suited figure picking his way through the cemetery on a tangent away from them. Justifiably paranoid of Men in Black by now, the mages probably give chase.

Make the chase dramatic. Describe how the dark figure pulls up the collar of his trenchcoat; quickens his pace; slips behind hedges, memorials, and cypress trees. Introduce obstacles, such as open plots or low walls around which a pursuer must travel.

Depending on how quickly they catch up, mages might trap their prey against some tomb. Or consider this scene: they break though a rain-soaked hedge and into a dozen black-clad figures, who turn upon the intruders menacingly. The mages then realize that the black-suited figure was only a Sleeper, late for funeral services!

Aftermath

Norna is alone — she has lost her parents, has few friends, and has attracted unhealthy interest. Sympathetic mages might try to get her back on track. She needs a Mentor to teach her how to control her magick. She needs somewhere to belong. Most of all, she needs help to make it through the imminent future.

Here are a few suggestions for subsequent scenes:

- Dr. Weaver identified Himiitsu as his murderer. Mages seeking vengeance might arrive at the U.C. Medical Center and Scene Thirteen.
- The ghost also mentioned that Mrs. Weaver is dead. This may be news to Norna. Confirming this would require they visit her house (Scene Six).
- Finally, if you plan this scene carefully, the Marauder attack in Scene Eight could occur in Lincoln Cemetery — quite an evocative setting.

Scene Eight: Enter the Fray

*Get your motor runnin'
Head out on the highway,
Lookin' for adventure
Or whatever comes our way...*
— Steppenwolf, "Born to be Wild"

keeping the Wylderness entrapped. They want her dead.

Another possibilities finds the characters intentionally meddling in the Marauders' plans. They may have watched for Marauder activity or possibly tracked them using Correspondence magick. The Technocracy and the Marauders have clashed once or twice while the characters were elsewhere; the Marauders might mistake the players

Plot

In these scene, the Marauders return with a vengeance. The reason for their attack depends on the course of your plot. If Norna accompanies the mages, she is the primary target. The Marauders have discovered that she is crucial to the Technocracy's plans for

for Technomancers. Perhaps coincidence simply conspires against them....

For whatever reason, Marauders attack. Their attack draws agents of the Technocracy, who want to protect Norna (if she is present) and drive off these enemies of stability. The scene probably ends with characters escaping in the confusion. Then again, the extremely foolish may be captured by Men in Black; the extremely determined may even find allies in the Marauders!

Setting

This scene occurs whenever you want it to, wherever the players happen to be at the moment. You might want to manipulate events slightly to make the most of a setting. Time this attack for some dramatic moment in some interesting location — Lincoln Cemetery, the Golden Gate Bridge, the player group's sanctuary (assuming that they have one) or even Norna Weaver's house!

Whatever the setting, note that the Drama section assumes some wide-open space. A raid into the cabal's sanctum, for instance, would be handled differently.

Challenge of the Spheres

Just before the Marauders teleport into the scene, each mage rolls Wits + Intuition (difficulty 8). The highest number of successes equals the number of turns of warning. This warning is vague, perhaps just a feeling of foreboding: "I've got a bad feeling about this!" Disciples of Time may have foreseen this event and prepared an ambush.

At any rate, 10 cyclists appear from nowhere (two have been lost during previous raids), engines roaring, tires squealing, screaming alien battle cries. As before, the Marauders circle like sharks. One Marauder engages each mage while the rest continue circling.

Each contest is different; keep in mind the players' interests and their characters' abilities. Each Marauder retreats by teleportation upon losing; one of his fellows subsequently engages the victor.

- Facedown: A Marauder rolls up beside one mage and stares at him through a blank helmet. He has initiated a traditional Combat of Wills. Use the Facedown rules from p. 261 of the *Mage* rulebook, but use Appearance + Intimidation instead (and remember the Marauder's Dream Background). The mage's strength lies in his higher Willpower. If the Marauder loses face, he disappears.

- The Way of Swords: If one of the mages fancies herself a fencer, she meets a fellow enthusiast. One Marauder dismounts, drawing a huge scimitar from a scabbard on his back. During the fight, he teleports about, dodging blows and performing flank attacks. Each success at Correspondence magick lowers his own difficulty and raises his opponent's difficulty by one (for purposes of hitting). Countermagick allows the mage to sense these movements.

- Teleport Tag: This option applies to a mage of Rank Three Correspondence. A Marauder steps up to the mage

and backhands him across the face, then disappears. Thus begins a common custom among Correspondence mages—the Tesseract, more vulgarly known as Teleport Tag. The rules are simple. First, combatants must remain within a limited distance of the Point of Challenge (equivalent to one city block). Second, the Tagged must catch up with and strike his challenger within five jumps. A mage first activates Correspondence Sensing to locate his challenger, then shifts to that location. Once there, both opponents roll initiative. If the mage wins, he may attempt to strike the dodging Marauder. If he loses, the Marauder shifts away too quickly, and the hunt resumes. If Tagged, the Marauder backs down.

- Chicken: This engagement works if the mages were driving somewhere when the Marauders attacked, or if they try to escape in a vehicle. A Marauder shifts through space to get ahead, then speeds toward them. Assume the two vehicles are five turns from collision. Each turn, both drivers roll Wits + Drive (difficulty of the opponent's Willpower). To simulate the increasing tension, gradually increase the required number of successes—one success on the first turn, two on the second, and so on. A driver who fails to score the required successes must turn aside (though a player may chicken out any time).

If neither driver turns aside... Well, passengers in enclosed vehicles lose three Health Levels, minus soak (seatbelts provide three extra dice). Cyclists lose seven Health Levels, minus soak. A Marauder could shift out of danger in time... if the crazy bugger wanted to.

Another variation on this involves some sort of pursuit (p. 258 of *Mage*). The Marauder cycles have these stats: Safe Speed 70, Maximum Speed 120, Maneuverability 8.

- Spirit Pawns: A mage with at least Rank Two in the Spirit Sphere is challenged to a game of Umbral Chess. One mage (determined by initiative, mutual consent, or other means) thinks of the nastiest Umbrood she knows. She then attempts to call upon it. The second mage must think of a rival spirit, preferably more powerful than the first. He tries to summon it. If all goes well, the two Umbrood meet and battle one another. The Disciples of Spirit peer into the Umbra to see which triumphs. The mage whose pawn is defeated must back down.

In game terms, the first mage rolls Intelligence + Cosmology (difficulty 6), and must achieve at least one success. She then attempts to Summon Spirit; again, achieving at least one success. The second mage does the same. To see who summoned the more powerful Umbrood, total each mage's skill and magick successes; the more successful mage summoned the most powerful spirit. The logic behind this is that some mages know of more powerful spirits, but are only able to attract their Minions; other mages know only Minions, but can easily call upon them.

- Invent any other engagement that players might enjoy, or at which their characters are proficient. A martial-arts duel is a good example. A Marauder's Dream gives him a fighting chance at anything.

These engagements are merely diversions. While mages are distracted, the remaining Marauders continue to circle, all the while combining to create a magickal effect designed to tear Norna apart if she is present. Every other turn, roll the Marauders' combined Correspondence (difficulty 6). Each cluster of three successes causes Norna to lose one Health Level as she stretches and warps. Norna resists with Willpower; mages can attempt countermagick. If Norna is not present, the Marauders target anyone who seems to be doing too well or fighting too dirty.

Just when things look grim for the mages (or if they are doing too well), 15 Men in Black approach. Their orders were to follow the cabal and capture Norna undamaged. They are dedicated to destroying the Marauders. Three black Cadillacs suddenly skid to a stop beyond the circling cycles. If necessary, three Men in Black cordon off the area to limit Sleeper witnesses. Two others attempt to snatch Norna (these, the mages must deal with). Other Men in Black engage the Marauders. A veritable blinking contest begins as each opponent shifts to gain an advantage. Soon they move so fast that one hardly sees them. Only Disciples of Correspondence can target them. Marauders and MiBs then disappear completely, continuing their battle somewhere else.

In fact, the Marauders are beaten away. If mages defeat the two Men in Black assigned to snatch Norna, they can escape. If slow to act, though, they must deal with the three crowd-controllers. If the mages do not escape soon, eight surviving Men in Black return. They combine on Mind effects to induce thoughts of surrender (difficulty 5; four successes required), and probably succeed.

Making a Deal with Madness

Truly patient characters may try to communicate with the mad cyclists: to find out what they want; to negotiate peace; or to offer alliance. To get the Marauders' attention, a mage must score three successes on an Appearance + Leadership roll (difficulty 8). If successful, one cyclist breaks off the attack. Here is the mage's chance to attempt Oration or Fast Talk, adding any Destiny rating to the Dice Pool. At least three successes are required. If a mage manages to make peace, the Marauder offers this information:

- Static ones have imprisoned an ally. This one (and here he points to Norna) will be the new warden. Therefore, she must die, her Avatar extinguished. If mages explain that they oppose the Technomancers, the Marauders seem satisfied (for now).

- The Marauders are planning to attack the changeless ones, through a Portal they have discovered. If the cabal shows interest, they vow to return for them. The mages might also persuade them to give away the entrance's location. In this case, a Marauder boasts "Tunnelzzz below!" (meaning the sewers) and presents them with a glass orb containing murky yellow liquid, in which an arrowhead floats. This weird compass will locate a sewer Portal to GeneTech Lab.

The Men in Black have nothing to say except, "Resistance is futile."

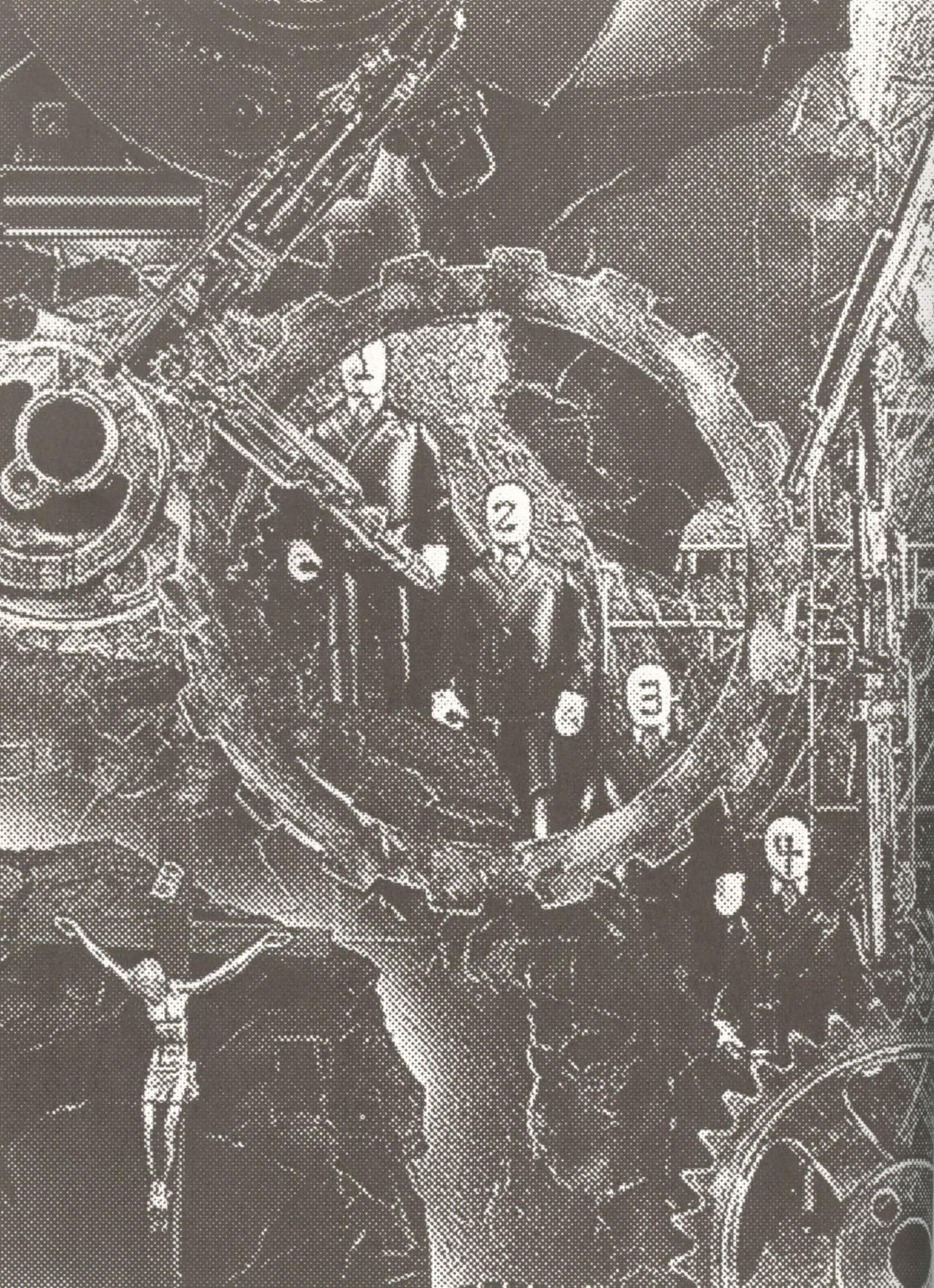
Aftermath

This scene is a diversion. The adversaries are inscrutable, and mages probably learn very little from the attack. However, this attack may well lead to several strange tangents:

- If mages participate in the Marauder attack, refer to Scene Ten for details. Eight cyclists return to pick up the mages (who ride behind or in sidecars). The warband rides through sewers and access tunnels toward one of GeneTech Lab's secret Portals (Scene Fourteen). After raiding the Technomancer Construct, the band slips into the Near Umbra to attack Cob in its lair (Scene Fifteen). However, no matter how much force the band can muster, it is eventually overcome by pattern spiders. The Marauders retreat back into the Progenitor lab and through the Portal. They then scatter, leaving the mages to flee on their own.

- The Marauder compass leads to a Portal to GeneTech Lab. Refer to Scene Fourteen for its entrances and defenses.

- Finally, Men in Black might capture the mages. They take prisoners to GeneTech Lab and suspend them in clone tanks. The Storyteller must adapt Scene Fourteen to take this into account. Their best opportunity for escape comes with the Marauder attack in Scene Ten.



Chapter Three: Tangled Webs

*With them the seed of wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the harvest that I reap'd —
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."*
— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXXI

The mages have learned much about the goings-on in San Francisco. They have overcome troubles, puzzles, traitors and physical danger. In this chapter, circumstances move against them.

First, the Technocracy holds a Symposium wherein the fate of Norna Weaver is ultimately decided. If she is not yet in the Technocracy's hands, Dr. Himiitsu receives even greater resources with which to capture her and neutralize any troublemakers.

Meanwhile, the remaining Marauders take advantage of this meeting to attack GeneTech Lab and Cob's lair. They mortally injure the spirit, and San Francisco feels the effects. The Wylderness tests its static prison, and a sudden tremor damages buildings, sparks fires, and panics citizens. This is but a taste of what would happen should the

Wylderness break free. The mages realize that the clock is ticking....

Finally, Dr. Himiitsu contacts the mages. He explains what is at stake. If mages are protecting Norna, they face an unenviable choice between her liberty and the rupture of reality.

During Madame Cleo's card-reading, the Tower may have appeared in someone's Future position. This chapter provides two towerlike settings: the Union Law Office building and Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill. Fulfill the prophesy of madness by introducing a brief bout of Quiet possibly brought on by a Technomancer's Mind magick. Appropriate imagery for this fit includes spiders and cobwebs, or even repeated tower motifs.

Scene Nine: Net Gain



Plot

This scene describes an emergency Technomancer Symposium, scheduled for 9 p.m., November 7th. This information is placed in its own section for a few reasons. First, the meeting is an important behind-the-scenes event. Its effect on the plot should be clearly explained. Another reason is for the Storyteller to use this scene as a cutaway. By describing their enemies' actions, you can incite a range of emotions in the player mages: anticipation, helplessness, anger or a sense of looming fate. It also gives the enemy a face, thus setting the stage for future antagonists. Finally, characters might have learned the location of this meeting by searching Seth's apartment (Scene Eleven) or Himiitsu's office at the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Twelve). The brave, desperate or crazy may attempt to crash the meeting.

Setting

The Technocracy holds its Symposium on the 26th floor of the Union Law Office, located downtown in Union Square. Within the district, one finds stores such as Macy's, boutiques, the Geary and Curran Theaters, and over 40 hotels. Nearby, cable cars meet the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) at the station in sunken Hallidie Plaza. Traffic is always gridlocked. Mages entering this region note that parts of downtown are blacked out. Power returns in half an hour.

Union Square, the heart of San Francisco's commercial district, is a 2.6-acre oasis planted with palms, boxwoods and seasonal flowers, all concealing an underground parking lot. The square barely contains its constant bustle; preachers rant at any who listen, while panhandlers accost any who stop. Office workers eat lunch on benches next to homeless sleepers. Street musicians and mimes amuse tourists waiting for a cable car. Pigeons roost in all available space. Corporate types loosen their ties as they head eastward across the square and enter Maiden Lane, a "red light" alley lined with prostitutes' cribs. Surrounding buildings partially shelter the square from wind and intermittent showers.

The Union Law Office building blots out the southern sky. A glass and sheet metal skin clings to the framework, embodying a style known appropriately as Corporate International Brutalist. Even more than the exterior, the inner lobby, halls, and offices present an unfeeling and inhuman environment; the steel-frame furniture, gray walls, and lack of decoration certainly provide an appropriate meeting place for the Technocracy.

The smoky windows of office doors bear gold-painted numbers rather than names. On the 26th floor, one locates the office of the Union Law firm. All senior partners are conspicuously absent today, all taken ill by a coincidental flu epidemic. Yet voices issue from the boardroom, whose door is locked and windows blinded.

Weavers of Fate

In the shadowy boardroom, representatives of the Conventions have assembled to determine the fate of Norna Weaver. Brother Johnson of the New World Order sits at the table's head, his emotions concealed by a featureless (!) face. Two Men in Black lurk behind his chair. On his right, Dr. Himiitsu stands beside the seated Merika Seth, representing the Progenitors and their proposed experiment. Their Superior bodyguards stand nearby. On Johnson's left sits Harold Wu, the eyes, ears and voice of the local Syndicate. Tecson of Iteration X sits at the far end of the table, scanning the others with one cybernetic eye. He seems more comfortable with his two HIT Mark companions than with organics. Also present is the Void Engineer Eva Raum, dressed in a white flight suit with the EuroSpace logo.

Most of them know about the proposed experiment. At this Symposium, they are to give formal approval and negotiate the transfer of any necessary resources. What follows is a typical exchange:

Rolling up a chart, Dr. Himiitsu concludes his presentation.

"In closing, I propose another attempt at Project Reincarnate, this time using Norna Weaver as a subject." Here he glances at Merika Seth. "We believe her Avatar is powerful enough to survive the process. As well, her status as an Orphan should help her adapt to the new form. By contrast, Williams was essentially weaker and firmly entrenched in the Chorus' reality paradigm. We have estimated the success rate at 73.6%."

"It had better work," snaps Harold Wu. "The Syndicate has invested too much in this venture to see another failure."

"The Inner Council has every confidence in Dr. Himiitsu and his Progenitors," says Brother Johnson, the tone of his voice stifling dissension. Turning his blank face to Himiitsu, he asks, "I take it the Order's agents assigned to your team have performed adequately?" Before the question can be answered, the building sways. Dr. Himiitsu turns to Merika. Her surprised expression is enough to tell him that neither had expected an earthquake.

"Oh, no — the lab," he mumbles in synch with Merika's gasp of "Cob!" Then together, both curse, "Marauders!"



To Arms!

If the player mages crash the Symposium, the Technomancers follow these tactics:

They scatter. The two HIT Marks and two Superiors open fire with mundane weaponry. Merika Seth hits a few buttons on her portable computer and slips into the Umbra. Eva Raum talks into a wrist communicator and promptly dematerializes (Correspondence). The Syndicate's representative decides it is time to leave, and quickly does so. Dr. Himiitsu knows that his duty lies at GeneTech Lab; jumping through a window, he swallows a handful of pills and transforms into a crane. Tecson of Iteration X stands and fights, hurling Forces and Matter projectiles and striking with his cybernetic piledriver arm. Brother Johnson directs his Men in Black to intimidate mages into surrendering (Mind).

Characters

Descriptions of Dr. Himiitsu and Merika Seth are found in Appendix One. No statistics are supplied for the other Technomancers. The Storyteller can create these himself, or simply assume that each mage is a Master or Adept of one Sphere and a Disciple of at least one other. Iteration X is associated with the Sphere of Forces; the New World Order specializes in Mind; the Syndicate controls Spirit, while the Void Engineers master Correspondence magick.

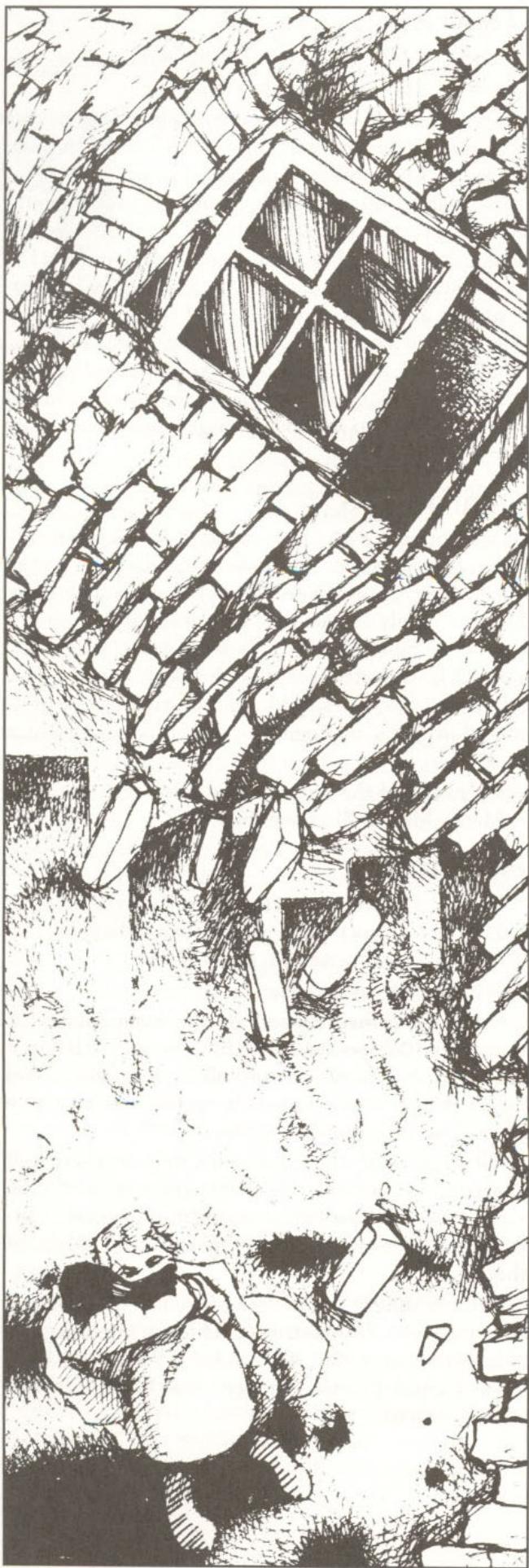
See p. 282 of the Mage rulebook for descriptions of HIT Marks, Men in Black and Superiors.

Aftermath

While the Technomancers discuss plans, the Marauders take action. Their attack on Cob's lair and its effect on San Francisco are described in Scene Ten.

Other follow-ups include:

- Having gained support at the Symposium, Dr. Himiitsu need only go ahead with his experiment. If he has yet to abduct Norna, he commits all his resources toward doing so. Mages who continually oppose him receive a message. This composes Scene Eleven.
- If mages crash the Symposium, they may very well face defeat. Do not cut the characters a break if they attempt this. The least failure results in them being captured. Scenes Ten and Fourteen explore the ramifications of this.
- On the other hand, lucky mages could triumph, and even overpower a Technomancer. Through interrogation, they learn the entire plan. This probably leads to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).



Scene Ten: Call of the Wyld



Plot

This scene is an event rather than a setting. While mages go about their business, they witness a number of minor disasters. A small but noticeable earthquake rattles the city, surprising seismologists and frightening citizens. The tremor cracks a few water mains and snaps power cables, blacking out entire blocks. Although the damage is minimal, dozens of minor elements contribute to a picture of order breaking down. This quake should spur the players to do something, and soon!

This trail of chaos leads to the Marauders. While the Technomancers met, the Unpredictable Ones infiltrated GeneTech Lab through a secret Portal leading to the sewers. They fought with Superior guards, slew Progenitor mages, and smashed equipment. Taking advantage of the weak Gauntlet, they slipped into Cob's lair in the Near Umbra! They attacked the weakened Umbrood and dealt Cob a mortal blow. Before being able to free the Wylderness, however, the Marauders were overrun by swarms of pattern spiders. They retreated through the Gauntlet into GeneTech Lab, then into the sewers.

Still, the Marauders did some damage. As Cob shudders in its death throes, its Pattern Web weakens, and Wyld chaos begins to leak into reality. Unless a replacement for Cob is found soon, San Francisco will fall apart.

Setting

This scene occurs wherever characters happen to be when some Marauder runs Cob through with his scimitar. The mages may have even joined the attack, in which case the news of the earthquake greets them upon their return, giving them reason to question their decision.

Drama

This section describes three types of drama. Highlight one or more of them depending on your story's pacing and the troupe's interest. Some may not apply to particular settings, but may figure into the story as part of a newscast.

- **Earthquake:** San Francisco is hit by a sudden tremor, measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale. If the characters are near tall buildings, a block of crumbling statuary breaks loose from a ledge and plummets toward some innocent bystander. Call for Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 4) and consult the Perception table given in the accident scene in Scene One. This provides a difficulty for dodges.

Being struck by a concrete gargoyle results in the loss of four Health Levels (before soak).

• Fire: Sparked by snapping power cables or something as simple as hot grease knocked off a stove, a few fires have started in the city. Characters pass a burning building. Through a third-floor window, they barely make out some victim being overcome by smoke. Though sirens echo through the streets, a fire engine has yet to reach this blaze (another symptom of chaos).

To save this person, a rescuer must first reach the third floor (30 feet up). Climbing from balcony to balcony is hazardous (difficulty 8) but possible (see Climbing, p. 236 of *Mage*). A more direct method is to run through the flames on the lower level and the stairwell. This requires two turns of running through smoke and falling beams, and the raging inferno will cause second-degree burns over much of the body (see Fire, p. 249 of *Mage*). Vulgar Correspondence magick is the simplest trick.

Once on the third floor, rescuer and victim must still escape (hopefully, someone thought to bring a rope...). Finally, first aid may be required.

Note that an Adept of Forces can attempt to control the flames. The Storyteller should permit a sort of extended action (not usually allowed with magick), allowing portions of the flames to be affected. A total of 10 successes will extinguish the fire. The same effect can be achieved by Disciples of Matter if they create water.

• Upset Citizens: By coincidence, an unusual number of protest groups are active today. The nature of this scene depends on the mages' location. Perhaps the mages meet some minority group in Union Square, protesting real or imagined injustice. Better yet, pro-life activists have assembled outside the U.C. Medical Center. They have assembled based on a rumor that the research wing uses human fetuses in its experiments. A few police officers keep watch. The quake momentarily sobers them, but the arrival of Dr. Himiitsu provokes frenzy once again. One fanatic has brought a gun. He shoots the doctor before being apprehended by police. Dr. Himiitsu rushes into the Medical Center, seemingly oblivious to the wound.

This sort of event seethes with dramatic possibility. The mages might try to restore order by physical presence, oration or Mind magick. The mages' mere presence may lead to police mistaking them for troublemakers and arresting them. If the players are too forceful, they might become targets of violence themselves.

Aftermath

Disciples of Spirit note (with a Rank One magickal effect) that all the recent disasters are but reflections of something occurring in the Near Umbra. This line of thinking could lead through the Gauntlet (Scene Five) and to Cob's lair (Scene Fifteen).

Desperate now, Dr. Himiitsu wants to begin Project: Reincarnate immediately. If Norna is still shielded by the mages, he commits all resources toward her capture. Refer to Scene Eleven.

Scene Eleven: Laying It on the Line

*There is no disaster greater than taking on an enemy
Too easily. So doing nearly cost me my treasure. Thus
Of two sides raising arms against each other, it is the
One that is sorrow-stricken that wins.*

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Verse LXIX, Book Two

Plot

This scene applies to mages who continually shield Norna or otherwise disrupt the Technocracy's plans. One mage receives a graphic vision of a tower on a hill. This is Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill, as an Intelligence + Enigmas roll (difficulty 4) will confirm. The image appears to a random mage each hour until the players act on this "hunch" (Mind magick originating from several Men in Black working in conjunction). If characters continually resist through countermagick or Willpower, a Man in Black simply delivers a written message. (Page 40.)

Assuming that the characters accept this offer, they meet Dr. Himiitsu (actually a clone) atop Coit Tower. He explains his plans for Norna and the consequences of failure, and even asks if they wish to help. He hopes they will surrender Norna. If not, Men in Black move in for a final attempt at abducting the Orphan.

The scene ends in one of two ways. Either the mages and Norna are taken to GeneTech Lab (willingly or "in irons"), or the Wylderness threatens to break free.

Setting

Telegraph Hill is one of many undulations forming the foundation of San Francisco. Its name derives from history;

GeneTech Laboratory Construct

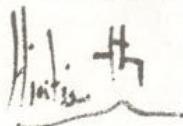


Better Living through Genetics

Enlightened Ones:

Why do you continually oppose us? Our agenda is sound; we seek only to protect reality. Whatever our differences, the hostilities must end now. In the very least, learn what's at stake before taking your stand — then accept the consequences. If you embrace reason, meet me at Coit Tower. Don't worry about the time; I'll know.

Sincerely yours,



Dr. Himiitsu
Director of Research

this hill was the site of the first West Coast telegraph. Located in the northeast sector of the city, it overlooks the ruined Embarcadero Freeway. A stretch of the wharf runs to the north, while Chinatown stretches to the south. Telegraph Hill Boulevard winds up the slope, passing condominiums, landscaped lawns, patches of trees and rickety wooden steps. The road eventually ends at Coit Tower.

Coit Tower was donated to the city by an eccentric lady named Lillie Coit in memory of her husband. As if to recognize her love of firefighting, the tower (which was constructed in 1934) looks something like a stylized hose nozzle. It also resembles the Leaning Tower of Pisa. From the tower's base, a staircase spirals up to a landing roughly 50 feet above the hill's crest. While characters wait, the sky darkens tremendously. Thunder rumbles above. Suddenly, a storm breaks, dumping black rain upon the city.

After waiting in the rain for a few minutes, the characters see a glistening black Cadillac creep up Telegraph Hill Boulevard and park at the base of Coit Tower. A large man in gray pulls himself out. He enters the tower. After another 30 seconds, he reaches the landing where the mages wait.

Dr. Himiitsu introduces himself. He gets straight to the point. He relates the existence of Cob (as Seth explained it to him) and the Pattern Web that suppresses the Wylderness. He tells how Cob is dying, "even faster now because of the Unpredictable Ones' meddling." Finally, he explains his plan to transform Norna Weaver into a powerful pattern spider.

"So you see, your interference threatens the very fabric of reality. I am not an evil man, nor an unreasonable one, but the Path often forces us toward unreasonable decisions, unfortunate ones. If we fail to install a new warden, San Francisco will fall and a seething chaos will warp the land. I alone have borne this burden for too long. The decision now rests with you."

The mages now face an uncomfortable choice. They can either stand up for Norna's rights or sacrifice her to protect reality. Norna is a conformist and needs guidance. Her decision will depend a great deal on what is said, and by whom.

Norna, at this point, feels the tug of her destiny; it frightens her, but it excites her as well. She has always had a fatalistic streak a mile wide. Now, with her parents dead and the possible fate of the city on her action, she could go either way.

If the Storyteller prefers a simple resolution to this dilemma, make Charisma + Leadership rolls for Norna's trust. The difficulty depends on the roleplaying and how much Norna trusts each person: a proven friend faces a difficulty of 4; Dr. Himiitsu, 8; while the default difficulty is 6. If the mages agree with Dr. Himiitsu, they may substitute their difficulties for the doctor's. If their advice differs from Dr. Himiitsu's, the rolls are opposed. Consult the following chart for Norna's reaction:

If mages side with Dr. Himiitsu, he thanks them for "thinking of the grand scheme." Suspicious characters can even witness the transformation if they wish.

Success Reaction

Botch: "Don't talk about me as if I weren't here! I hate you all!" Lashing out with subconscious Entropy, Norna flees down the spiral steps and out of Coit Tower. As the mages watch, two Men in Black slip out of the Cadillac and grab her. Norna will resist her transformation, if it comes to that.

Failure: "I'm not a puppet; I can make up my own mind. No. Why don't you be the guinea pig?" With more roleplaying, allow another roll. Norna resists any transformation.

One Success: "Well...OK." Still uncertain, Norna sides with this character. She resists any transformation.

Two Successes: Norna is somewhat convinced. If it comes down to it, she resists her transformation because of fright. Another Charisma + Leadership roll (difficulty 6) would calm her.

Three Successes: Norna sees the common sense in what is suggested. If this involves her transformation, she will not resist.

Four Successes: Norna is won over. If this involves her transformation, she is even a bit excited and proud. Although she remains afraid, Norna will not resist.

Five Successes: Norna is a complete pawn. If this involves her transformation, she will not resist, though she will still be sad for the end of her life as she knows it.

"The Error of Your Ways!"

If, however, the players still oppose the Technocracy, all hell breaks loose. Dr. Himiitsu attempts to grapple Norna (if present) and flee down the staircase. Men in Black "creep out of the woodwork." One appears on the landing each turn (a total of five will appear); two others ascend the spiral stairs, blocking escape or pursuit of Dr. Himiitsu; two more wait in the Cadillac below, in driver and "shotgun" position respectively. Two Cadillacs are parked at the base of Telegraph Hill. One is empty; the other holds five Men in Black, ready to pursue fleeing mages.

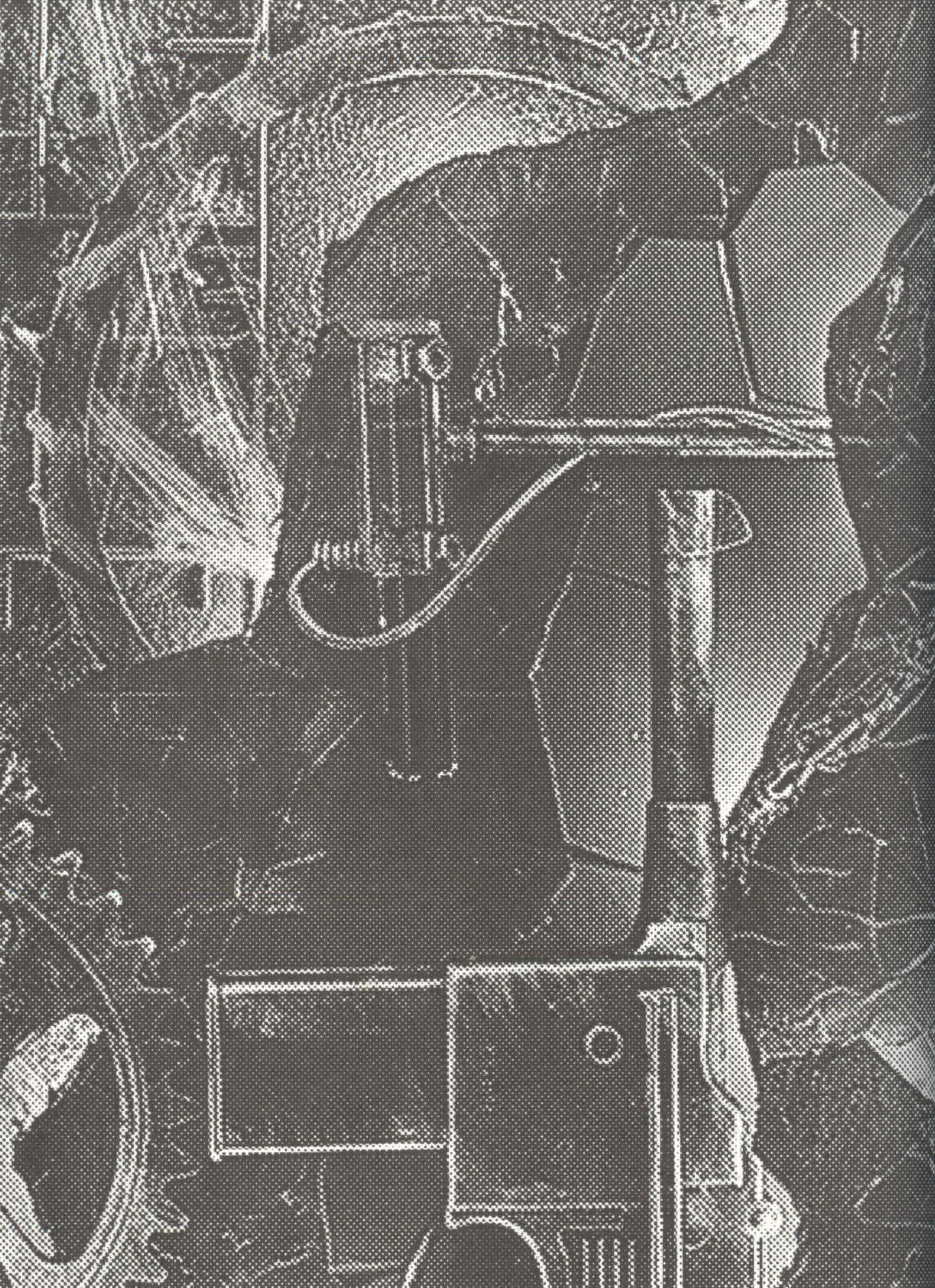
The Men in Black coordinate on numbing minds while Norna is abducted. They will use lethal force if necessary. This scene's drama is intended to be intense and overwhelming, but not unbeatable. Orchestrate the action so that clever, persistent and lucky mages can triumph.

On the other hand, the story could continue after their capture.

Aftermath

One way or the other, the mages will probably end up at the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).

- Should Norna remain free for much longer, the Wylderness seems ready to break free. The Conclusion deals with this possibility.



Chapter Four: Prometheus Unbound

*Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing;*

*And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.*

— The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, verse XXXII

This chapter describes the antagonists' inner sanctums: Merika Seth's apartment; the U.C. Medical Center and GeneTech Labs where Dr. Himiitsu can be found; and Cob's lair in the Near Umbra. These are the likely locations

for this story's climax, the final snipping of the threads of fate. Whatever courses the players follow, they will conclude this story in the Horizon Realm of the Progenitors.

Scene Twelve: Warp and Weft



Plot

From the start, characters may suspect Merika Seth of being a mage. She survived a near-hit with an auto and is renowned for predicting the weather. A Virtual Adept might have contacted her in the Net and wondered how she knew so much. Disciples of Spirit could have discovered her workshop in the Umbra and slipped sideways into her apartment.

If the characters follow these leads, they may find Seth's address readily enough. Upon arriving, the mages might investigate the apartment for clues, or even question Merika herself if she is home.

Setting

When not working at KWLF, mingling at dance clubs, or discussing Project: Reincarnate with Dr. Himiitsu in GeneTech Lab, Merika resides in her apartment on Diamond Heights.

Diamond Heights is a steep and windy ridge just south of Twin Peaks, on the border of San Francisco proper. Despite austere

weather, the locale provides a commanding view of the settled slope and the wild and secluded valley called Glen Canyon Park. One sees suburban townhouses, a few apartments and several churches. A shopping center, elementary school, and the Glen Park BART Station can also be found, concealed by distance and sheets of rain.

Generally, the architecture is uninspired, lacking the sense of history that distinguishes older districts. Merika Seth lives on Red Rock Way, in a sixth-floor apartment.

To enter the apartment, someone must pick the lock (Dexterity + Technology; difficulty 8) or break down the door (a feat of Strength). The doors and windows have sophisticated alarms. Unless the players deactivate this system (Intelligence + Technology; difficulty 7, four successes), the police arrive before the players can leave.

Seth's apartment faces southeast. Ripples of rainwater wash down the huge living room window, obscuring the view. Occasionally, a flash of lightning helps illuminate the softly lit room, which is tastefully furnished in black and beige, juxtaposing old and new. A sandstone statue rests beside an advanced entertainment center; an antique endtable sits next to a black leather sofa. A door on the left opens into a kitchen, while the right-hand hallway leads to the bedroom, bathroom and study.

By searching the apartment, mages note a number of pertinent details:

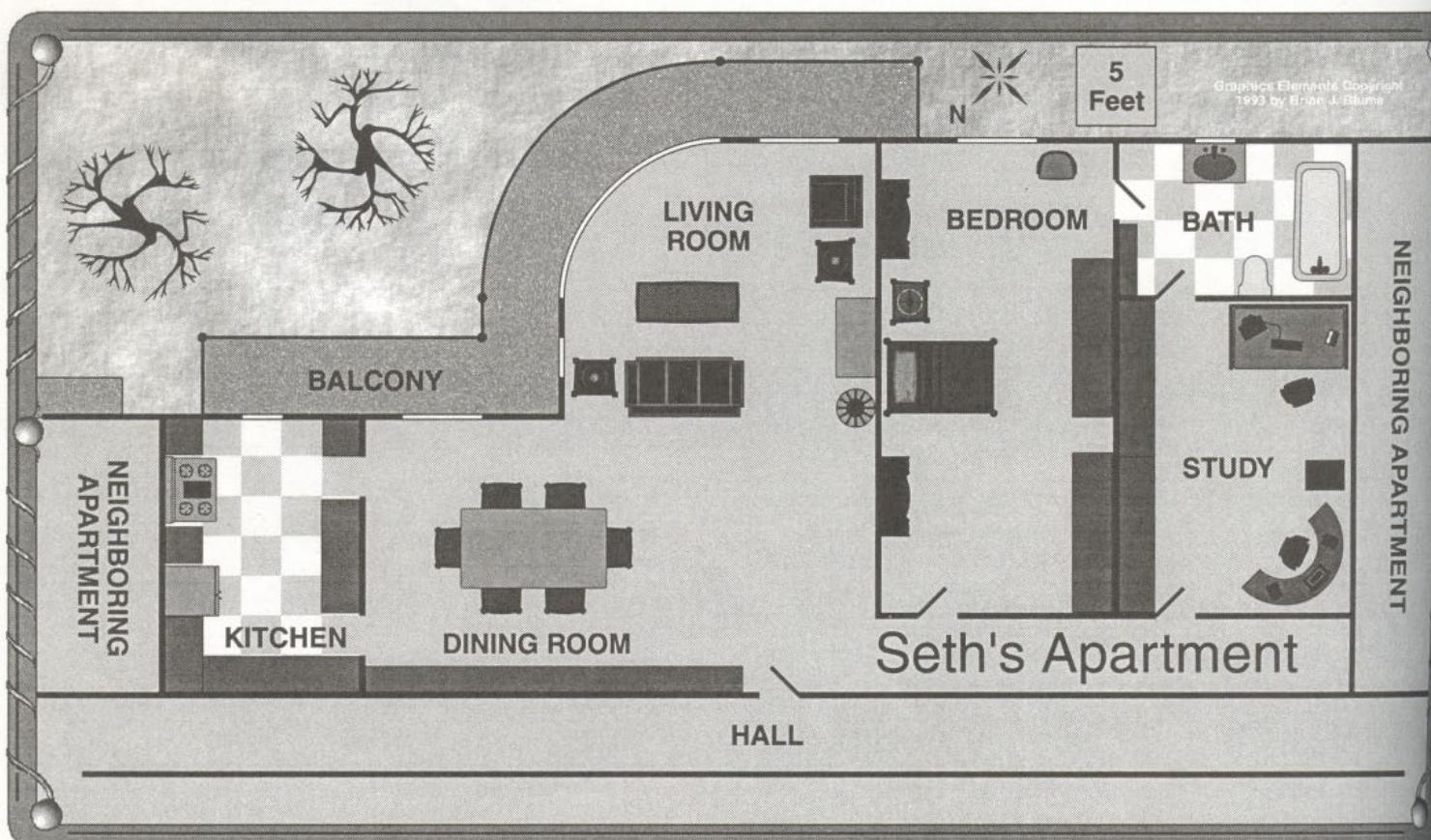
- False Sympathy: A general search of the bedroom, coupled with a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 4), uncovers a "Get Well" card in a night-table drawer. The card seems to read: "Heard about your recent accident.

Hope the car can be repaired! You should be more careful. Heal quickly and get well soon. K.H." In fact, a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9) detects a message written in magickally invisible ink, which reads: "Symposium to be held in the boardroom (26th floor) of the Union Law Office, 253 Geary. Moved up to tonight at 7 p.m. Be prompt." Adjust the time on the card to whatever time works best for your game.

• IBM Clone: The study contains, among other things, a personal computer. It looks custom-built from a number of systems, as well as other strange parts (cathode ray tubes, Nintendo joysticks, etc.)! Booting up the computer by-passing its security system requires an Intelligence + Computer roll (difficulty 5; three successes).

A desktop program includes an "address book." It makes reference to "Dr. Ken Himiitsu, Director U.C. Medical Center: (415)-476-1000, Extension #12." The Storyteller might call for Wits + Intuition rolls before supplying this clue.

The hard-drive directory lists some strange file names, such as "Project: Reincarnate." If accessed, this file seems to be a sort of paint program depicting various digital sketches of arachnids. See "Seth's Workshop" in Scene Five for more details.



- Attached via cables to this computer are a set of virtual reality goggles and gloves. Merika uses these foci for Spirit magick, particularly for slipping sideways. Only another Virtual Adept could use this gear, which can access the Net Realm.

- Also in the study is a sophisticated weather forecast workstation. It includes specialized software and attachments to barometric hardware assembled on this apartment's roof. The workstation is online. A monitor displays a contour map of central California with digital cloud cover and atmospheric readouts. A window in a lower corner reads: "C:\TEMPEST Processing." A Wits + Computer roll (difficulty 6) reveals that the workstation is not so much forecasting future weather conditions as monitoring (controlling !!!) the present storm. Euthanatos and a few other mages may have heard of the rote called Shango's Grave.

Shutting down the workstation will not end the storm; it is a tool for Merika's coincidental magick, not a Talisman.

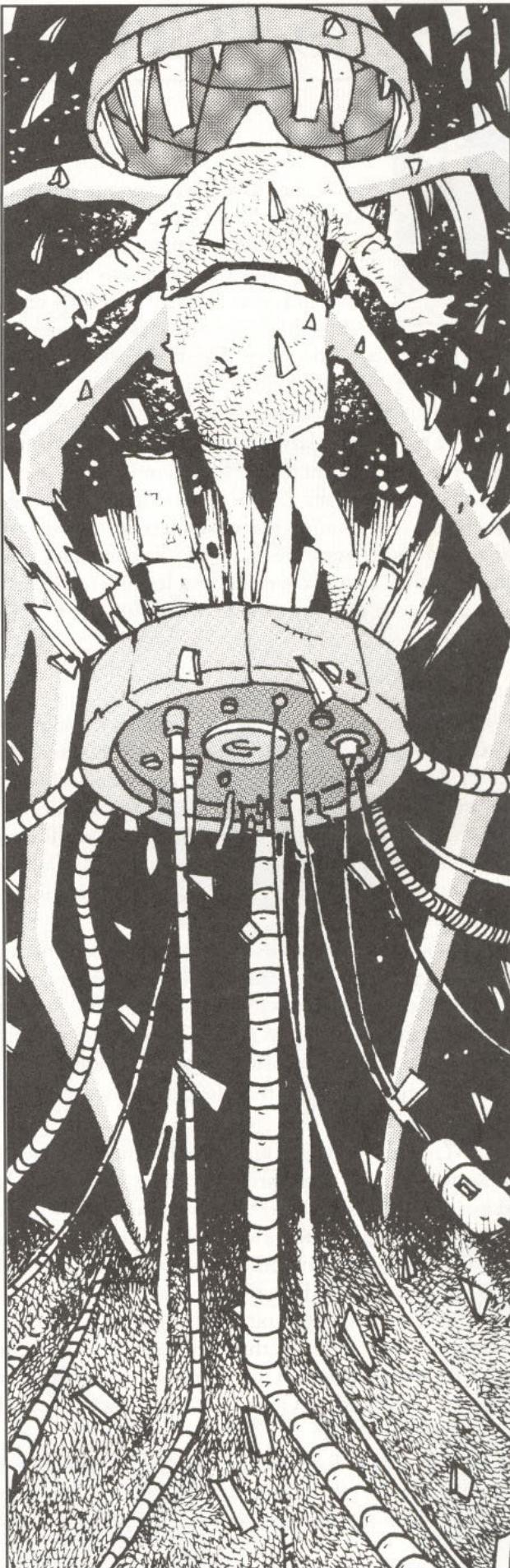
It may be dramatic to have Merika interrupt an intrusion, returning home in time to catch the mages unaware. She will not, to put it mildly, be pleased, but would rather flee than fight impossible odds. Seth will be furious, but not stupid. Her reaction to visitors depends on what the mages have done up to this point, but she will remember them from Scene One. With the Marauders loose in the city, Seth will be on her guard.

Mages may question Merika if they get the chance. Fast-talk and interrogation fail to impress her; charm and seduction make a better impression. She is a poor liar, so the right questions elicit many answers. However, incautious mages find the tables turned; Merika's charm and good looks might win over the players, or trap them until the police arrive. Merika Seth is a local celebrity; players will lose any confrontations involving the authorities.

Aftermath

Barring the possibility that mages are hauled off to jail for breaking and entering, their investigations could lead to other scenes:

- Stepping sideways in Merika's apartment leads to "Seth's Workshop" in Scene Five.
- The "Get Well Card" identifies the time and place of a Technocratic Symposium. If it has not already passed, player characters might want to crash it. See Scene Nine.
- By telephoning Dr. Himiitsu's number, they reach a secretary at the U.C. Medical Center. Following up on this physically, they enter the next scene, Thirteen.



Scene Thirteen: Stitch in Time



Plot

Any of the players who require medical attention may be taken to the U.C. Medical Center, one of two major hospitals in San Francisco, and the closest to many of the scenes in *Loom of Fate*. Ironically enough, visiting this hospital brings the characters to the Technocracy's doorstep. Dr. Himiitsu has linked a Progenitor Horizon Realm to the Medical Center and hopes to save San Francisco from there.

The players may have followed various clues throughout the story that point to Dr. Himiitsu and his Progenitors, and might investigate the hospital. After bypassing Dr. Himiitsu's receptionist, the characters search his office, finding a secret message from the Technocracy. In an elevator, they also discover a Portal leading to GeneTech Lab, a Progenitor Construct "beneath" the Medical Center.

Setting

Just southeast of Golden Gate Park lies the University of California. This college specializes in medical disciplines. The U.C. Medical Center is a collection of buildings sloping down Mt. Sutro. A linked pair of square, clear-span towers form the Health Sciences Instruction and Research Units One and Two. Other structures house the College of Dentistry, Surge Research Lab, School of Nursing, and Outpatients Clinic.

The storm has not abated. Leaving the parking structure, the mages are drenched by flapping sheets of rain. Between booming thunder, they hear a clock tower announcing the time in bass gongs. This sound, combined with the black sky, instills a feeling of depression and doom.

For purposes of plot, the Medical Center offers three places of interest.

- The local elevators are not mundane machines. For those with a key, they form Portals to GeneTech Lab. Mages may find such secret doors through a few means. Disciples of Prime or others with a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) can sense raw Quintessence pulsing beneath their feet. A Forces mage may note that residual energy still crackles in circuitry attached to the "B" button. In fact, if someone presses this button while introducing a surge of energy (Rank Three Forces, one success), the elevator "descends" to GeneTech Lab, passing through a Portal into the Realm.

- The Surge Research Lab is one place where Dr. Himiitsu can be found, though he spends more time in GeneTech as the plot progresses. Behind closed doors

lining stark corridors, scientists experiment with frozen embryos, partially dissected fetuses, and DNA strands.

- Another of Himiitsu's haunts is his office. Outside its door, Agnes Merridrew, the doctor's elderly receptionist, crouches behind an IBM, her hooked fingers pecking away at the keyboard.

If anyone asks about Dr. Himiitsu, Merridrew requests the inquirer's name and checks an appointment list. By the way she fumbles at the computer, it is obvious that she hails from a simpler time...or that she's stalling. When she fails to find their name, she offers to make an appointment...: "How's 11:00 of Tuesday, two weeks from today?"

To bypass Agnes, characters must Fast Talk, use Mind magick, or employ other means. One possibility is to add one's name to the appointment list by precise manipulation of the monitor's pixels (Rank Two Forces; three successes). Another idea is for someone to distract Agnes while others slip into the office. Agnes is a great talker, and it takes very little to get her started.

Characters who manage to read Agnes' computer screen by some means can see a window in the lower left corner of the monitor. A message in the window reads: "All roads lead to Rome. All strands lead to Cob. Make haste. M.S." This message is from Merika Seth. Only Agnes is "keyed" to this computer. Unauthorized users will set off an alarm to Dr. Himiitsu.

Agnes herself knows nothing about her employer's true nature. Threats or magickal questioning will buy the players little more than trouble.

The Good Doctor's Office

Entering the office, the players search for clues (assuming Dr. Himiitsu is absent!). A paper-tray holds an interesting memo. Its coil and slightly smeared message reveal that it came through a fax machine. Though the message seems to refer to a transfer of medical files from San Francisco General Hospital, it is actually a concealed memo from another Technomancer. By succeeding on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 9), a mage can read between the mundane lines:

Dr. Himiitsu,

The Marauder problem is out of hand. This month's Symposium will be held in the boardroom (26th floor) of the Union Law Office, 253 Geary. Invite Ms. Seth; perhaps in person she can better explain this "spirit" phenomenon. Your last report referred to an "impending crisis." Therefore, we shall meet earlier than planned, at 7 p.m. on November 7th.

Brother Johnson,

Inner Council, New World Order

The office is mundane in every other way. There are no clues anywhere to implicate Dr. Himiitsu in Dr. Weaver's death.

Aftermath

This scene has two major exits. If characters discover the location and date of the Technocratic Symposium, they could crash (assuming it has not passed). This leads to Scene Nine. Or they may infiltrate GeneTech Lab via an elevator (Scene Fourteen).

Scene Fourteen: GeneTech Lab



*I'm goin' down into the maelstrom,
Goin' down, gonna drown.*
—Radio Birdman, "Into the Maelstrom"

Plot

One way or another, the mages will visit GeneTech Lab. They may raid it for Quintessence, knowledge or vengeance. They may be captured by the Technocracy, or possibly even ally with them.

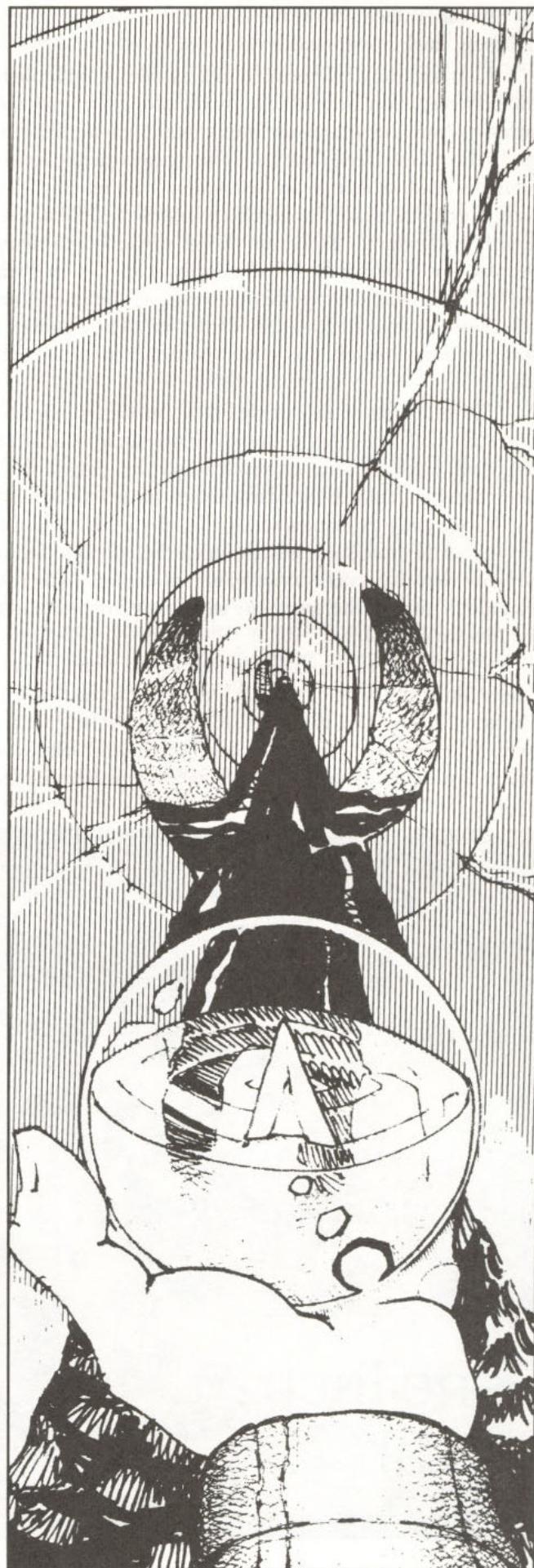
If characters find the Progenitor Construct themselves, they enter through one of three places. Various access tunnels under San Francisco lead here, as do special elevators from the U.C. Medical Center. An unknown breach from the Umbra exists as well. The mages could arrive early during the story when all is running efficiently, or in the destructive wake of a Marauder attack. They may even accompany the raiding cyclists.

With so many variables, the plotting of this scene varies tremendously. Therefore, the description below is but one version. It assumes the mages arrive by themselves after the Marauder attack. The Storyteller can easily work backwards from this point if necessary.

Setting

The foundation of GeneTech Lab is a Horizon Realm powered by the Wylderness. The Realm has these Sphere ratings: Correspondence 0, Entropy -2, Forces +1, Life +4, Matter 0, Mind +1, Prime +2, Spirit -1, Time 0. For a general description of how such ratings work, see p. 181 of *Mage: The Ascension*.

The Node supplies 25 Quintessence per month. Here, the Gauntlet's rating is 2, requiring only one successes with Spirit magick to slip sideways. Magickal difficulties at the Node are three less!



As mentioned above, the Construct has three means of access. Each presents its own difficulty.

- Underground: Dozens of tunnel systems wind through the concrete crust beneath San Francisco. Some provide access to gas mains and power lines; others are sewers. A few lead to Portals to Gene Tech Lab. The tunnels' twists, turns, branches and crossings are extremely disorienting. To navigate this maze, roll Perception + Intuition (difficulty 8; 6 with a schematic) each turn. If the mages botch, they become lost. The number of rolls depends on how far from the U.C. Medical Center the players began, ranging from one (within sight) to 30 (edge of the city). The Marauder compass from Scene Eight points unerringly to GeneTech Lab.

Within sight of an earthly Portal, intruders face another obstacle. The Progenitors have bred mutant alligators as guards. Lurking beneath sewer water, or lying still to resemble logs, these beasts can easily surprise mages. Call for Perception + Alertness rolls (difficulty 7). If someone scores four or more successes, he alerts the others so far in advance that they could conceivably sneak past. After the Marauders' attack, the 'gators are more alert (five successes required to get by).

- Near Umbra: From Cob's web in the near Umbra, mages can climb mystic power cables to reach the floating Horizon Realm. The cables breach a shimmering membrane (the Gauntlet) beneath GeneTech Lab. Disciples of Spirit can easily penetrate this membrane; other Awakened

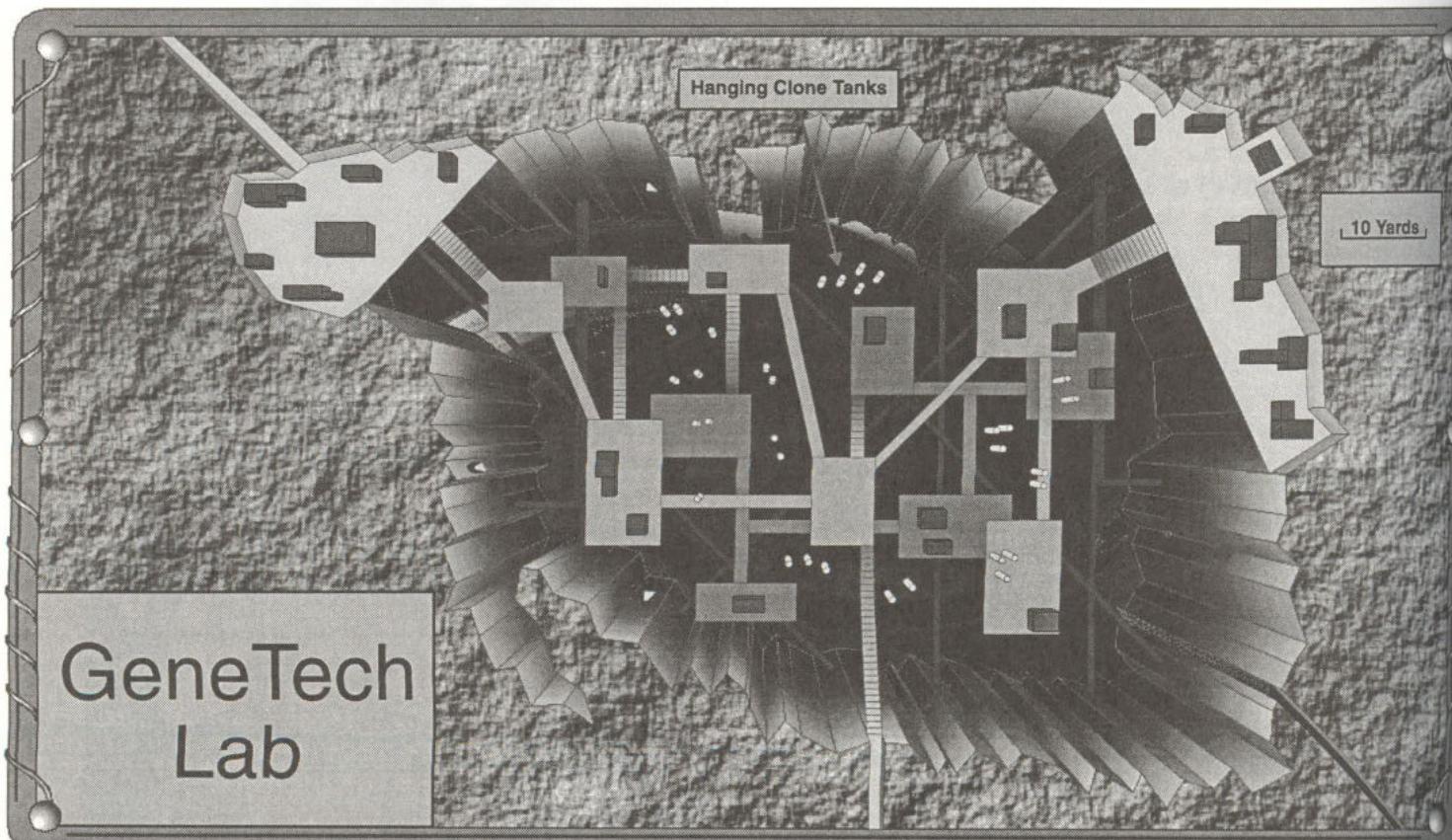
beings may do so by spending one point of Willpower. Once the membrane is breached, mages find themselves "surfacing" into an inky pool at the bottom of a cavern. To reach the lab's main level, they must climb cables from the water (difficulty 4). From within the Realm, the membrane resembles brackish water. Only a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 7) or Spirit magick hints otherwise.

- Elevators: As discussed in Scene Thirteen, certain elevators descend from the U.C. Medical Center to GeneTech Lab. Superiors guard the landing and may note an elevator's imminent arrival.

Gene Tech Laboratories

GeneTech is a strange Realm; it resembles a giant cavern. Perhaps the Wyld emanations feeding the Realm have made a more sanitary environment impossible. Dozens of tunnels open from the walls, some spilling water into a lightless pool below. The Progenitors have added to this mess, constructing a series of balconies, steel bridges, suspended landings, and ladders. The net effect is a multilayered tangle of cables, wiring, pipes, catwalks, neon tubing and girders, all suspended above the cavern's watery floor. The place resembles some James Bond villain's lair or a mad doctor's lab (which, of course, it is). The air throbs with a hum of strange machinery. Every once in a while, a mysterious clang echoes off the walls and water.

When characters reach the upper catwalks, they see the Progenitors' latest experiments. Giant test tubes hang



from the ceiling, attached to machines by cables and wiring. Bodies in various stages of growth float in amber fluid, occasionally convulsing. Some of these bodies are definitely not human.

If the Marauder have attacked, GeneTech Lab is in ruins. Piping and power cables are severed. Some spray pressurized water, or thrash and sizzle from live electricity. Others drip multicolored liquid or emit dazzling sparks — raw Quintessence! Machines have shored out. Catwalks tilt precariously. Some cloning tanks have shattered, aborting their contents; undeveloped bodies sprawl in pools of nutrient fluid like fish out of water. One looks like a young Dr. Himiitsu. Everything has been smashed, slashed, burned, and magically warped.

Arriving Free

The primary drama involves infiltrating the lab. Even after bypassing Superiors and alligator guards, mages must remain alert. At least one Superior patrols the catwalks at all times. Every few turns, characters must Sneak. In most cases, a complete success avoids detection; however, guards are more alert after the Marauder attack (five successes required!). Incautious mages might stumble into a Superior, Progenitor scientist, or even Dr. Himiitsu.

If our characters have entered though sewers or the Near Umbra, they must navigate pipes and cables to reach the lab proper. Assign Climbing and Jumping tests as appropriate.

Arriving in Chains

Captured mages find themselves imprisoned in empty clone tanks. These are molded of high-tech Plexiglas, requiring a Strength Feat of 6 to shatter (assume six soak dice and six Health Levels for purposes of weapon damage). Attached tubing usually feeds processed Quintessence into the tanks; now they drain the prisoner of one Tass per hour (similar to the Rank Three Prime effect Bond of Blood). Clone tanks also have the incidental side effect of dampening magick. Prisoners do not benefit from the Realm's Sphere modifiers; furthermore, magickal effects are at +2 difficulty. Of course, mages are stripped of foci. The best chance of escape comes with the Marauder attack; if that has already occurred, they at least have a great view of Norna's transformation....

Mages who come to GeneTech Lab by invitation get to listen to Dr. Himiitsu's monologue as they tour the facilities. He gladly boasts about Progenitor genius. Prisoners are forced to listen to a harsher version of the same speech.

Lab Staff

At full strength, GeneTech Lab is staffed by half a dozen Progenitor mages, an apprentice or two, and Dr. Himiitsu. Merika Seth is an honorary Fellow. At least six Superiors keep guard. With a week's warning, the Chantry could rush the development of as many as 20 Superiors (though these would be akin to Howling Commandos rather than human beings). Finally, 15 Men in Black have been temporarily assigned to GeneTech Lab. Busy shadowing the city or engaged in battling the Marauders, they rarely enter the lab. Reverend Williams also drops by in more peaceful times to confirm his faith in Cob and the Technocracy.

After the Marauder attack, the staff thins out significantly. Besides Dr. Himiitsu (who was absent), only two Progenitor mages, Frey and Friia, survived the attack. Half the Superiors have fallen as well; one guards the elevator Portal while two patrol the upper catwalks. Dr. Himiitsu, Merika Seth, and Reverend Williams will all be in the lab to witness the final transformation.

Superior statistics can be found on p. 282 of the *Mage* rulebook. They carry hunting knives and Ruger 10/22 rifles with scopes. The other characters are described in Appendix One.

Aftermath

Physical exits from GeneTech lab include an elevator-Portal to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) and a breach in the Gauntlet leading to Cob's web (Scene Fifteen). Disciples of Spirit can easily slip into the Near Umbra; refer to Scene Five for a geography lesson.

Captured mages seek opportunities to escape; the Marauder attack outlined in Scene Nine provides one. Finally, the Progenitors may be ready to go though with their plan. Norna's transformation occurs in the Conclusion.

Scene Fifteen: Cob's Web

*There's a butterfly trapped in a spider's web
That's my soul up there.
— The Police, "King of Pain"*



Plot

This is another scene where the players' goals can vary tremendously. They may intend to slay Cob, or just witness the damage firsthand. They may come to offer help, or perhaps simply to steal Quintessence. Depending on the mages' motives and actions, they could clash with Marauders, pattern spiders or Wyld Things.

Setting

The mages may reach Cob's lair by dropping in from GeneTech Lab or crawling though perimeter webbing from the Near Umbra.

Cob's lair is encased by a thick mesh of Pattern Web. The sagging cables are tangled and adhesive, complicating travel though them. A touch sends vibrations along the web, alerting pattern spiders to intruders. To navigate the webworks, mages must make extended Dexterity + Athletics rolls (difficulty 6). A Disciple of Correspondence can lower this difficulty by one per success on Immediate Spatial Perceptions. A character who accumulates 10 successes reaches the other side. Failure indicates that she touches a strand, attracting a pattern spider. On a botch, she becomes tangled.

The strands are extremely tough. Snapping them requires a Strength Feat of 10. Assume the strands have five soak dice and five Health Levels for purposes of damaging them with certain weapons (e.g., a shotgun or chainsaw, but not a staff or even a non-magickal sword). Entropy and Matter magick are also effective.

Weaver of the Web

Within this mass of webs lies Cob's lair, a vast, open space with loose webbing strung here and there. An irregularly shaped rift opens in the floor. Over this opening, a web of thick cables strains against some invisible force. Each stand quivers with tautness; a few have snapped. The anchor points crack and split with stress. Pattern spiders scurry about. A particularly large pattern spider, Cob, sprawls next to the rift, trying in its weakened condition to weave two strands together.

The Umbrood is an impressive sight, even in its weakened state. The gigantic spider-spirit looms over its minions, its cybernetic skin ripped and rusting in a dozen places. If the Marauders have staged their attack, Cob moves sluggishly, Tass spurting from a huge rent in its abdomen. Nothing the mages can do will save the dying Umbrood. Cob is doomed.

A character with two or more ranks in the Spirit Sphere can talk to Cob, though it is bound to be a bizarre conversation. Cob is extremely clever and sees though most lies (Fast Talk faces a difficulty of 8). An honest approach is more profitable. Even so, Cob is busy trying to maintain the Pattern Web (though his efforts are futile) and has little time to talk with flesh-beings. Mages who try to help (e.g., by Repair rolls or Matter magick) get Cob's attention. There is little anyone can do; Wyld things undo the repairs as quickly as they are made.

Cob knows much about the Near Umbra and a little about the physical world though dreams. Because Cob is only coincidentally allied with the Technocracy, it may allow mages to restore Quintessence.

Approaching the rift, one notices multicolored vapors rising though the mesh. A mage can inhale this gaseous Quintessence to recharge his Avatar, though its Wyld origin creates quite a buzz (one fewer die to all actions for one scene). Below, the Wylderness Node is a swirling mass of molten ooze. As this primordial soup surges against the rift's walls, some splashes though the web. The droplets form Wyld Things. These spirits devour the webbing until pattern spiders converge upon and immobilize them.

Many thick cables pump Quintessence from the Node to the Horizon Realm above. These cables provide a means of reaching GeneTech Lab. The 100-foot climb (difficulty 6) requires an accumulation of 20 successes.

Aftermath

By climbing power cables, mages can reach the Horizon Realm above and enter GeneTech Lab; this setting is described in Scene Fourteen. Mages who penetrate the surrounding webbing find themselves in the Near Umbra (Scene Five).

This is also a good place from which to watch the transformation of Norna's Avatar into a pattern spider. This occurs in the Conclusion.

Conclusion: Time to Unwind

...Were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

—T.S. Eliot, "Journey of the Magi"



In the Conclusion, the mages tie up all the loose ends or loosen the final bond. In general terms, the plot ends in one of two ways. The first scenario has Norna Weaver undergoing a transformation of body and Avatar, being reincarnated as a powerful pattern spider. Her efforts stabilize the Pattern Web. In the second scenario, mages interfere with the Technocracy's plans. Norna is safe, but at what cost to reality?

These are generic endings. Your Troupe's storytelling will change the details and perhaps put a new spin on events. What if some martyr offers to take Norna's place? Optimally, the candidate is a Hollow One with an Avatar of no less than 4 and a Destiny of no less than 3. To reward this player's heroic sacrifice, a generous Storyteller might provide an extra five or 10 freebie points toward the creation of his next character.

The outline below should help a Storyteller deal with either event.

Scenario One: Norna Reborn

Farewell now my sister
Up ahead there lies your road
And your conscience walks beside you
It's the best friend you will ever know.

— Dead Can Dance, "Tell Me About the Forest"

Free or bound, the player mages watch as the Progenitors seal Norna in a clone tube and flood it with raw Quintessence. Dr. Himiitsu works dials, levers, and buttons on a great machine. Beside him, Merika Seth has typed "C:\SPIRIT>RUN PROJECT V2.2" into her portable computer. A silver spider appears on the monitor. As Seth makes final adjustments to the program, the image flexes and mutates. Norna contracts in obvious pain, then stretches as her body strains to grow in all directions.

Systems

This physical transformation is a conjunctional effect combining Rank Five Prime, Rank Four Spirit and Rank Five Life effects. Taking all factors into consideration, the difficulty is only 2! Roll Himiitsu's five dice of Arete anyway; 1s still fail, while 10s allow additional rolls (Himiitsu's specialty is cloning). Apply one success from Willpower. If Norna resists, roll her Willpower and subtract the successes. Dr. Himiitsu needs five successes. Norna's

spiritual transformation is a Rank Four effect. Follow the same procedure with Seth's Arete of 4. She must use Willpower to achieve five successes. This narrative assumes both mages succeed.

Above, in the tank, Norna transforms. Her hands and feet extend, forming additional joints on longer, more arachnidian limbs. Four additional limbs sprout from her torso. Her entire body warps into two distinct segments, becoming like polished chrome (Norna and her Avatar retain enough will to assume a more appealing shape than Cob's). The spider-child grows in mass, soon pressing up against the glass. Dr. Himiitsu shouts for someone to lower and open the tank...too late. Fragments of Plexiglas and precious gallons of Quintessence shower the Progenitors as Weaver pounces onto a catwalk. Without looking back, it clammers down the cavern's wall and penetrates the watery membrane.

In its new lair, Weaver binds the Wylderness. Over time, it replaces the cablelike Pattern Web with fine, silver filaments. In the real world, San Francisco restores order. The power shortages, leaks and tremors stop. The Technocracy strengthens its presence; GeneTech Lab replaces damaged machinery, grows more guards, and attracts more Progenitor mages.

Even if the mages contribute to this success, their position with the Technocracy remains uncertain. Though they may have aided Dr. Himiitsu, they know too much and present a threat to the order. If the Technomancers survive the story, the player characters will see them again!

Fates Laughing

The transformation of Norna into Weaver is doubly ironic. The Technocracy is right; Norna must be sacrificed for the greater good. In restoring order with Norna's transformed spirit, however, the Technocracy has altered the Pattern, weakening its own long-term hold on power. By reworking Cob's web, Weaver will, over time, right the long-standing imbalance between Dynamism and Stasis.

Although Weaver has become a pattern spider, the essence of the girl she once was will guide the web she weaves for San Francisco. Norna knew the value of the Wyld within the weave, and may work it into her grand pattern rather than binding it tightly in threads of order. Norna's rebirth ushers in a new kind of stability for the city, a more balanced path between Dynamism and Stasis, Wyld and Weaver. A path to guide the city toward Ascension.

Scenario Two: The Cataclysm Stirs

"Define bad..."

"Imagine all of the atoms in your body halting and suddenly going in reverse at the speed of light."

"Okay, that's bad..."

Exchange between Ray and Egon, *Ghostbusters*



Norna escapes, or is killed. The transformation fails, or never occurs. Cob loses cohesion and breaks apart. As if sensing weakness, the Wylderness surges and swells beneath the pattern-web. Then with a loud, metallic twang, cables snap....

The Wyld strains, the ground trembles, the Realm shakes...and nothing happens! Dr. Himiitsu is baffled. This delay should gain the characters an opportunity to pay back old scores or escape if they can. The Portals back to Earth will still work, though they may quickly shift out of space if the Realm is badly damaged. A running battle may erupt from the Realm into the sewers or even into the Medical Center, although Dr. Himiitsu will break off pursuit if it endangers the Sleepers. The mages will escape, but they have gained

powerful enemies within the Technocracy and puzzling questions to answer.

What happened? Better still, what *didn't* happen? The Wyld should have burst forth; reality should have unraveled; San Francisco should even now shatter into ruin. Why does the Web still hold?

The answer may be found at an obscure werewolf caern across the Bay, in Mt. Tamalpais State Park. Here, a group of Garou placate a mysterious spirit of destruction called the Cataclysm. As an embodiment of destruction, this Cataclysm must tear the Pattern Web asunder before the Wyld can be set free. This caern is detailed in the Werewolf supplement **Caerns: Places of Power**, although the Storyteller could certainly invent her own caern from scratch.



The werewolves and mages are currently unaware of the roles that both play in the stability of the region. The weave of the web and the power of the caern both act to subdue the Cataclysm and contain the Wyld within a stable order. Because this destructive spirit, this Wyrm being, is bound, a necessary piece of the natural order is missing. The Wyld creates; the Pattern gives it substance; to disrupt the substance, Entropy still must tear down the Pattern.

Because they know nothing of werewolf lore, the Technocracy is blind to the existence of the Cataclysm. They see Order and Chaos as the only two factors at work in existence, thus missing the whole picture. When the

Web strains, but does not break, the Technomancers will put every effort into finding this safeguard and exploiting it. The werewolves, it should be noted, will not be pleased.

Thus, the strands of Fate continue to unwind, even if Norna Weaver escapes her destiny. The players will want to know what keeps the Web intact, as will the Technocracy. The Marauders will want to know why the Wyld is still bound. The straining of the Web and the continued breakdown of order and stability in San Francisco will raise the stakes in this race. With Cob dead, the Cataclysm stirs. If the Web is not rewoven, the tug-of-war between Wyld and Weaver will awaken the Cataclysm, and the entire Western Seaboard will suffer for it.



Appendix One: Supporting Cast

Greater numbers might drift through the drama, of course — thousands in fact — but they could only ever be phantoms, agents, or, on rare occasions, reflections of the real and self-willing beings who stood at the center.

-Clive Barker, *Imajica*

This chapter compiles the descriptions of all characters important to *Loom of Fate*, grouped by association.

Primary Non-Player Characters

Norna Weaver

Essence: Primordial

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Deviant

Tradition: Hollow One

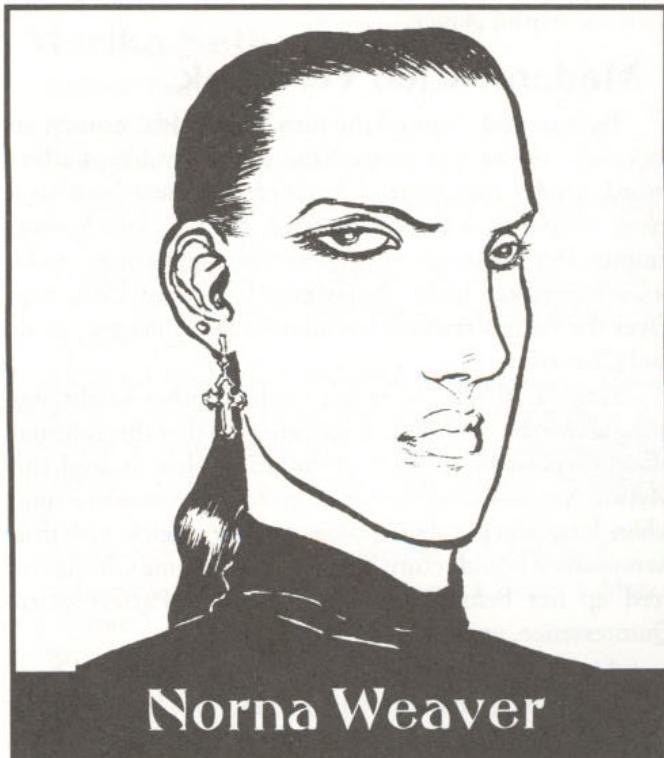
Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Awareness 3, Culture 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 4, Intuition 4, Intimidation 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Destiny 5

Spheres: Entropy 3, Time 3

Willpower: 5



Norna Weaver

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 3

Background: The daughter of an eminent surgeon, Norna grew up with all the luxuries money could buy. Her parents invested in the first early signs of remarkable intelligence and creativity, encouraging their child prodigy. Norna mastered Spanish and Latin by the age of eight, and showed promise in a number of artistic pursuits, though her morbid imagery concerned her instructors.

Despite her family's wealth, Norna lacked a normal upbringing. Her mother treated her more like a possession than a loved one, allowing Norna free expression while confining her with overprotectiveness. Her father showed true affection, but the two spent much of their quality time in the emergency ward and research labs of the U.C Medical Center. His death left a huge void in her life.

Norna suffers from two inexplicable phenomena: flashes of precognition, which too often come true and hint at a terrible fate that looms before her; and a charmed life despite the frequent accidents that follow her. She has no conscious control over her magickal talents and does not want to consider their implications.

Image: A 15-year-old girl with black hair drawn back severely from a high forehead. Her eyes are dark and knowing; those who meet her stare invariably feel defiled, as if she knows their innermost feelings and thoughts. Norna tends to dress in bulky skirts, stockings, and soft shoes — all black.

Roleplaying Hints: Continually stare at people, but rarely speak. What you do say should often be weird and disturbing. Defy orders with sarcasm and smart-ass comments; if the authority figure fails to cave in easily, comply with a resentful glance.

Madame Cleo Verthank

Background: Around the turn of the 14th century, an especially bright star pierced the night sky like a silver sword. Under this omen, Cleo Verthank was born to a gypsy couple in a northern region of the Holy Roman Empire. Her Mentors were gypsy seers, mad hermits, and a few sorcerers attached to the last great Covenant, Doissetep. Over the years Verthank has advised many mages, cabals and Chantries.

Exactly 76 years after her birth, another bright star hung above the earth. Verthank reflected that this celestial blade was poised as if to deliver the killing blow. Indeed, the Mythic Age was in full decline. Yet she had foreseen a time when, long after the abandoning of vulgar magick, a Mythic Renaissance would return in force. So Madame Cleo gathered up her belongings, filled her Life Pattern with Quintessence, and stepped out of history.

After each giant leap forward in time, Verthank paused just long enough to battle Paradox and plot her temporal route. She is presently on an extended layover. Because of



Madame Cleo

her many temporal leaps, Madame Cleo suffers from a Paradox Flaw: everyone within 13 feet of her slips though time more quickly than usual; each minute becomes one hour.

Aside from her awesome powers of time travel and divination, Madame Cleo has little magickal talent — certainly nothing approaching combat ability. Thus, statistics are neither provided nor needed — Verthank is a plot device, not a foe. As a servant of the Oracles of Time, her charge is to warn the mages and Norna about their fates. She is unaware of the Oracles' master plan (they, in fact, want Norna to survive at any cost), but suspects that the mages' destiny will affect reality itself.

Image: Madame Cleo is an ancient, heavyset woman. Her swarthy skin is wrinkled and sagging. Dark pouches underscore her eyes. She has but two remaining teeth. A few locks of gray hair protrude from beneath a dirty scarf. Madame Cleo wears colorful, loose-fitting garb and pounds of cheap jewelry.

Roleplaying Hints: As often as possible, speak in the future tense; when this confuses players, repeat in the correct tense. To get your point across, grab someone's hand and speak directly into her face. Act eccentric, cackling for no apparent reason. Become very serious when discussing fate.

The Technocracy

Dr. Ken Himiitsu

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Convention: Progenitors

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 3, Computer 3, Culture 2, Intimidation 2, Law 1, Leadership 4, Medicine 4, Research 4, Science 4, Technology 5,

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Influence 3, Node 5

Spheres: Life 5, Prime 4, Matter 4, Mind 1

Willpower: 10

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 14

Paradox: 6 (Because of accumulated Paradox, Himiitsu's hair grows at a rapid rate. His facial hair is unaffected.)

Background: To Sleepers, Dr. Himiitsu is head of the U.C. Medical Center and a competent medical scientist, but nothing more. He is actually a Progenitor mage. The future of San Francisco rests in his hands.

At work, Dr. Himiitsu maintains the guise of popular friend and colleague. He stops to talk with medical students and research assistants, and exchange passing pleasantries with those who imagine they have something important to do. As he does so, however, Himiitsu continually remembers his duties as head of the Construct. His responsibilities

as director of the U.C. Medical Center pale in comparison to these other duties.

Himiitsu is not an evil man; he bears a real concern for the Sleepers, and the impending fate of San Francisco weighs heavily on him. The Technocracy has charged him with stabilizing the city, and he takes his post seriously. To accomplish his task, he has recruited Merika Seth, whose creativity, computer skill and knowledge of Spirit are critical to success. Support for his task has been minimal; many among the Technocracy refuse to believe that Cob is in serious danger.

Dr. Himiitsu learned of Norna Weaver through association with her father, also an M.D. at the Medical Center. Noticing her powerful Avatar, he maneuvered closer to Dr. Weaver to keep an eye on Norna. He still regrets having to kill his colleague and will avoid violence if possible. He can, however, be quite ruthless if need be.

Image: Dr. Ken Himiitsu resembles a sumo wrestler. He stands over six feet tall and weights half a ton. Each morning, he shaves his head bald; by the end of the day, his hair has grown to a half-inch crew cut (a Paradox effect). When not covered by a lab coat, he wears a steel-gray sports jacket, which has been custom-tailored to his massive physique.

Roleplaying Hints: You are clever and charismatic when you want to be, intimidating and harsh when your time or temper is short. You tend to overlook trivial details, but when striving for a goal, your will, endurance and physical size make you a juggernaut.

Cabal: In mundane guise, Dr. Himiitsu is Director of the U.C. Medical Center. His real duty lies in heading GeneTech Lab. Many of the Technomancers do not take his plan seriously, and he aches to prove them all wrong.

Merika Seth

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Avant-Garde

Tradition: Orphan, trained by and then defecting from the Virtual Adepts.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 2, Awareness 1, Computer 3, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Enigmas 2, Expression 4, Intuition 2, Investigation 1, Leadership 2, Linguistics 2, Occult 1, Science 2 Streetwise 2, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Influence 3, Mentor 2, Talisman 4

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 3, Forces 4, Matter 2, Prime 3, Spirit 4

Willpower: 8

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 10

Paradox: 0

Background: Merika's past is vague and will probably remain so. Her real life began when she discovered that magick existed. Through a BBS, she found her first Mentor, a Virtual Adept calling himself Ramses (or RAM). After gaining all that she could from him, Merika linked up with the all-powerful Technocracy. Since then, she has taken every opportunity to achieve power over Sleepers, and influence among those who really matter — other mages.

Unlike many Virtual Adepts, Merika is not a hacker, computer geek, or video gamer. She is a skilled programmer and lives for manipulating computer technology. Merika either has enough sense to oscillate between real and virtual reality or is simply too shallow to maintain interest in any one topic for long. She could never be a full-time mage. Her faddishness had led to a number of mundane cover occupations, all of them glamorous.

Most recently, she has worked as meteorologist for KWLF. Strangely enough, her forecasts have never been wrong. Unbeknownst to Sleepers and many mages alike, Merika Seth does not report the weather; she creates it. Her weather forecast (quite literally "fore cast") workstation is a sophisticated vehicle for coincidental magick.

Merika Seth is the third Wyrd Sister (or Sister of Fate) in *Loom of Fate*. Norna Weaver is a prisoner of destiny. Madame Cleo Verthank can only report on the possible course of future events. Merika Seth symbolizes the power of Free Will over Fate, showing how a seeming observer can influence her world.

Image: Merika appears to be of Eastern origin; but whether the Near or Far East is difficult to say. She combines the best features of a half-dozen different racial groups

— smooth, tanned skin; golden brown irises flashing from almond-shaped eyes; dark, glossy hair worn stylishly short. Overall, she looks darkly exotic, mysteriously erotic.

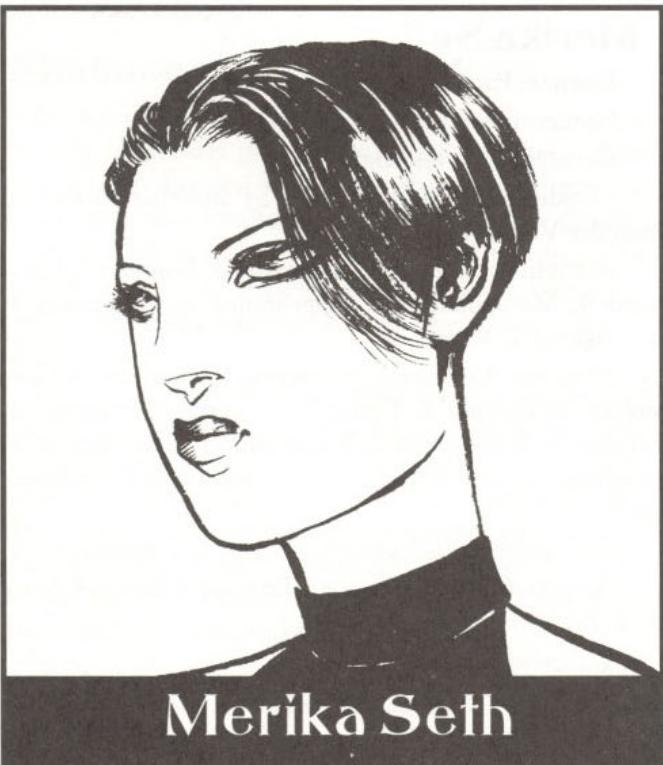
Merika dresses in the latest fashions. Strapless blouses and open-backed dresses reveal ideogram-tattoos stitched into her back and shoulders. (A roll of Intelligence + Dream, difficulty 8, reveal these to be the technobabble of pattern spiders.) She always wears a pyramid-shaped amulet (actually a Talisman, see below).

Roleplaying Hints: You are a poor liar, so don't bother trying. Soften the truth if necessary. During conversation, look directly at players for a few seconds before speaking in a husky whisper. When disapproving, habitually cross arms lightly across your chest.

You learn the latest gossip on any topic, then lose interest quickly. Lines of questioning, responsibilities and current lovers all eventually fall by the wayside, particularly if you have lost control over them.

Cabal: Merika is a traitor among traitors. Turning her back on Virtual Adepts, she allied with the very power bloc from which that Tradition first defected — the Technocracy. She works closely with Dr. Himitsu's Progenitors in an effort to restore San Francisco's pattern spider. In exchange for this help, she may draw from the Quintessential spillover near the Wylderness.

Talisman: Merika wears a pyramid-shaped Talisman crafted from unknown metal; she refers to it affectionately as "my personal pyramid power." This charm currently holds 10 Tass of Quintessence. The first of two potent effects increases the wearer's healing capacity (Life 3). The second transforms the entire body into an extradimensional alloy, effectively raising Strength and Stamina by one point per success while decreasing her Dexterity and Appearance by a like amount (Life 4, Matter 4) This effect is vulgar in the extreme and lasts for a maximum of one hour.



Reverend John Williams

Essence: Dynamic

Nature: Conformist

Demeanor: Martyr

Tradition: Celestial Chorus defector

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 1, Cosmology 1, Culture 4, Drive 1, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 2, Expression 2, Leadership 2, Linguistics 1, Research 2, Science 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Influence 3

Spheres: Life 2, Prime 2, Spirit 2

Willpower: 5

Arete: 2

Quintessence: 2

Paradox: 2



Rev. Williams

Background: John Williams lacked attention as a boy. Because of his small size, team captains literally overlooked him when picking players for sports. Because of his average ability in academics, teachers paid him neither praise nor concern. He was the middle child in a family of seven.

So he threw himself into religion. Not only was he finally noticed by his pious parents, but he caught the attention of some One even more significant. Whether though divine right or hard work, John Williams quickly rose to the rank of bishop and was assigned a diocese in San Francisco. Imagine his pleasure upon discovering that he was being considered for a higher hierarchy — induction into the Celestial Chorus! He has served the One faithfully for 10 years.

Last year, Dr. Himiitsu attempted to transform Williams into a pattern spider. The failed experiment corrupted his body, broke his mind and warped his Avatar. Now, his mind slips between the spirit and material worlds. Though Reverend Williams is still well liked, his associates have begun to wonder about his sanity.

Image: A small man in his early 50s, with sharp features and wispy white hair. During ceremonies and in public, he appears in full clerical dress, from miter to sanctuary slippers. Beneath these vestments is proof of his corruption: the remnants of Himiitsu's failed experiment. Stiff black hairs cover his torso and the upper portions of each limb. Four vestigial arthropod legs spout from his sides, and dozens of milky, multifaceted eyes cover his chest.

Roleplaying Hints: Usually calm, friendly but firm, with an air of authority. Panic when things do not go as planned. You have difficulty making decisions or taking action by yourself. Therefore, call for "backup" — spirits or

Men in Black — at the least hesitation. Fanatical to begin with, and brainwashed to boot, you would martyr yourself for the good of Cob and the messengers of His Word (the Technocracy). Make frequent pseudo-Biblical references; when angry, warp these prayers with arachnid imagery.

Cabal: Reverend Williams broke with the Chorus after his transformation. Now he forms the third major player in Dr. Himiitsu's bid for control.

Frey and Friia

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Convention: Progenitors

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Computer 2, Culture 3, Expression 3, Linguistics 1, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Research 2, Science 3, Subterfuge 1, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Destiny 2, Mentor 2

Spheres: Life 2, Mind 2, Prime 2

Willpower: 5

Arete: 2

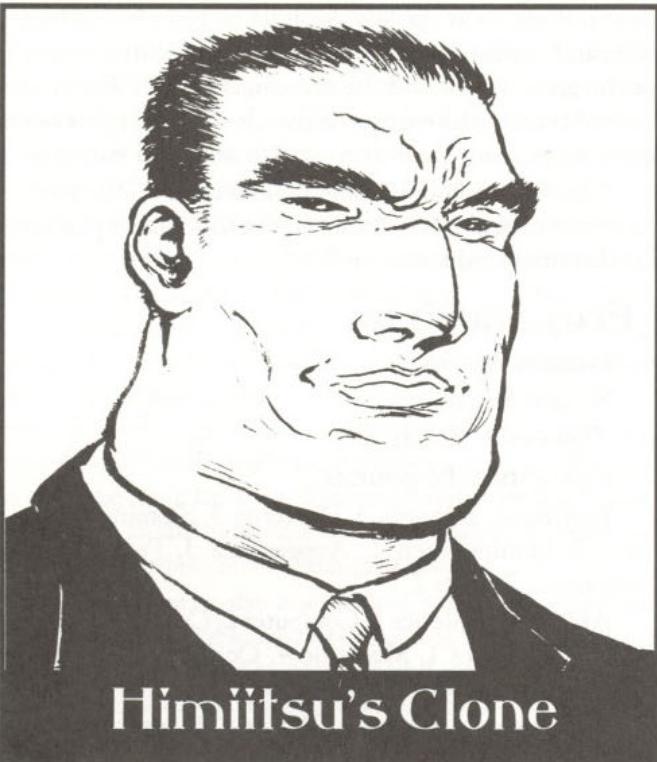
Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 0

Background: Frey and his sister Friia are obvious twins, fine specimens of Scandinavian stock: tall and fair, with long, white-blond hair and pale blue eyes. They claim to be identical twins, though any geneticist would declare this impossible. They speak Swedish to one another.



Frey and Friia



These Progenitors are charged with conditioning newly grown clones. Dedicated to their job, they rarely leave the lab. Frey and Friia managed to survive the Marauder attack through their loyalty to one another and nobody else.

Progenitor Clones

Dr. Himiitsu's Clone

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Brawl 4, Intimidation 2, Leadership 1, Subterfuge 2

Spheres: None, although this clone was treated with an experimental process that accelerates regeneration, equivalent to Rank Three Life magick (roll Stamina instead of Arete).

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -2, -5, Terminated

Innate Countermagick: All Progenitor clones receive two dice of countermagick versus magickal attack.

Background: This clone physically resembles Dr. Himiitsu in most respects. Only a close colleague has any chance of being suspicious (Perception + Intuition [difficulty 8]). Conditioned with Himiitsu's personality and memories, it knows everything about Project: Reincarnate. See above for a full description of Dr. Himiitsu.

Mrs. Weaver II

Norna's real mother has been replaced by this nearly identical clone. Since her creation, Mrs. Weaver II has studied the details of Norna's family. Her knowledge is not perfect, but good enough to withstand superficial inspection.

A Rank One Life effect shows that she is in very good shape, though not unnaturally so. Three such successes, however, indicate that she has never given birth! Mind magicks are ineffective when probing emotions or surface thoughts, but a Rank Three probe of the subconscious reveals her true agenda.

Mrs. Weaver II exists to put Norna at ease. When the little prodigy sleeps, she will telephone Dr. Himiitsu. Soon, a black car will arrive....

Mutant Alligators

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 5, Stealth 3

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x4), -3 (x4), Incapacitated

Attack: Bite (difficulty 5; Strength + 3 damage)

Armor: Thick skin adds three dice to soak rolls.

Innate Countermagick: As Progenitor clones, these alligators receive two dice of countermagick versus magickal attack.



Mutant Gators



Marauder Cycle Gang

The Marauders

Marauder Cycle Gang

Essence: Dynamic

Nature: Rebel

Demeanor: Deviant

Tradition: Marauders

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 1, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Dodge 5, Drive 5, Enigmas 4, Intuition 5, Melee 3, Survival 1, Technology 1

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Dream 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Spirit 3

Willpower: 3

Arete: 3

Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 0

Background: The tug-of-war between Cob's Pattern Web and the underlying Wylderness has already snapped more than one thread of reality. The Gauntlet loosens its grip on San Francisco.

Taking advantage of this fact, Marauders have slipped through from the Umbra. They believe that by breaking down reality, they can create a permanent Portal between Earth and the Near Umbra. This possibility provokes them into declaring all-out war with the Technocracy and Cob.

These Marauders are alien to our reality. They cannot communicate with Gaia's children and have trouble ad-

justing to the senses humans take for granted. Mostly, they operate intuitively or by discerning auras.

Image: These Marauders appear as a motorcycle gang. No two mages or cycles look alike. One fur-clad Marauder rides a huge, black Harley with a horned skull between the handlebars (Intelligence + Science, difficulty 6; the skull is from no earthly beast).

Another guides a sleek, humming cycle. This one wears a leather space suit with a gas-mask attachment. Most disturbing is the helmet's slit visor; instead of eyes, an oscillating crimson laser scans the streets.

A third Marauder brandishes a serrated axe and horned bow, shouting gibberish from atop a steppe pony. The mount's plutonium-shod hooves strike blue sparks as it gallops through the streets. This rider is a composite barbarian from nil-history.

Dirt bikes, three-wheelers, and a W.W.II sidecar bike are also represented. Each rider wears a full-face helmet and body-concealing clothing. These Marauders are armed with a variety of swords.

Roleplaying Hints: The Marauders are unknowable. Do not attempt to roleplay one of these creatures — it will ruin their strangeness. When speaking of them, use neutral terms: "the cyclists," "they," "them," even "it." Never say "the Marauders" or "he/she."

The Marauders are unpredictable. Sometimes they act in perfect harmony; other times, their thoughtless violence is just as likely to injure a comrade as an enemy. Use this random factor to challenge your troupe without overpowering them.

Cabal: This gang numbers 13 in the beginning and nine at the end. Through this story, they may appear singly, in small groups, or all together. Unless your troupe decides otherwise, their origins remain unknown.

Spiritual Entities

Cob, Umbrood Preceptor

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Culture 1, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Intuition 4, Technology 2

Backgrounds: N/A

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Matter 4, Prime 2

Willpower: Formerly 10, now 4

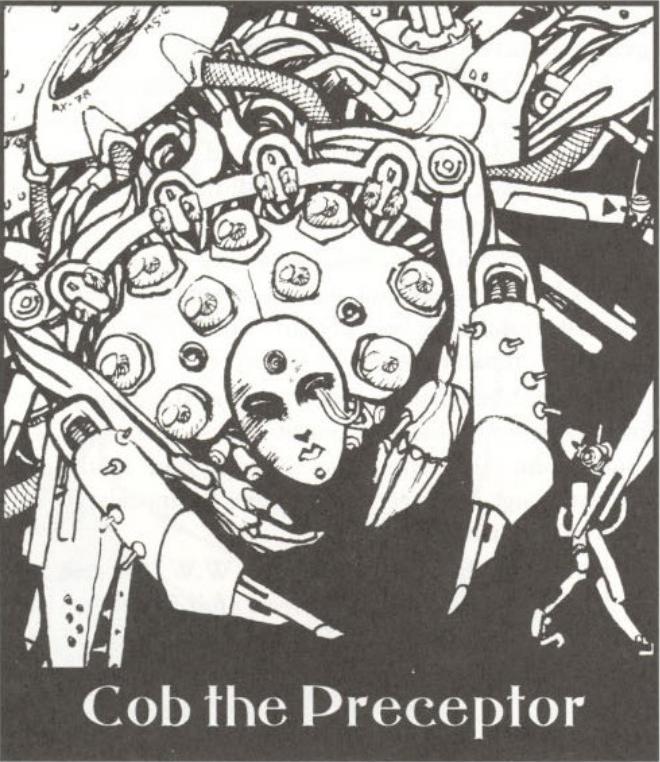
Arete: 6

Quintessence: 20

Paradox: 0

Health Levels: OK, 0, -1, -2, -3, -4, -5, Disrupted

Background: Cob is a unique pattern spider, conjured decades ago by the Technocracy and strengthened since then by the Conventions' magicks. Cob's ties to the city



Cob the Preceptor

have made it far more powerful than most of its kind, but the tug-of-war between Wyld and Pattern has also aged and weakened the spirit. Cob is wise, if single-minded, but beneath its dedication characters may sense its weariness.

Image: While Reverend Williams refers to Cob in male gender and Merika considers Cob female, it is an effectively genderless spirit entity. Cob resembles a monstrous, mechanical "arachnoid." From its abdomen grow eight jointed limbs, each ending in a prehensile gripper. Instead of muscles, they operate under a system of hydraulics. Fluid leaks from rusted joints, stiffening Cob's movement.

Its abdomen is elongated and flexible, like a scorpion's tail, for better manipulation of spinneret. Its metallic skin is dull black and patterned with rivets. Rust shows in spots, and other parts seem melted. Bundles of wiring snake between different body segments, some tangled or cut. Cob's many eyes glow like television static.

By the beginning of this story, Cob has lost cohesion (three fewer dice to all actions). The Marauder raid in Scene Ten accomplishes its goal; wild magick and a scimitar blade disrupt the weakened spirit.

Pattern Spiders, Umbrood Minions

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1

Abilities: Expression 2, Science 5.

Powers: Physical-Spiritual Ties (Spirit 1), Sense Weakness in Reality (Prime 1), Solidify Reality and Calcify (each Prime 2)

Willpower: 6

Arete: 6

Health Levels: OK, -0, -1, -2, -5, Destroyed

Pattern spiders search the Near Umbra for cracks in Quintessential reality. Upon finding any, they reweave the patterns. As a side effect, pattern spiders can create spiritual objects; each magickal success roll gives the object one Health Level for purposes of durability.

Pattern spiders can also target objects in the material world. Living creatures, for instance, become sluggish and rigid, eventually freezing altogether (apparently covered by a thin layer of calcified stone). This effect resembles the Rank Two Prime effect Rubbing the Bones. Calcified victims may still use mental abilities and magick.

Wyld Things, Umbrood Minions

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3

Special Abilities: Shapeshift (Entropy 3), Randomize (Entropy 2), Warp Matter (Entropy 3), Mutate (Entropy 4), "Schizo" (Entropy 5).

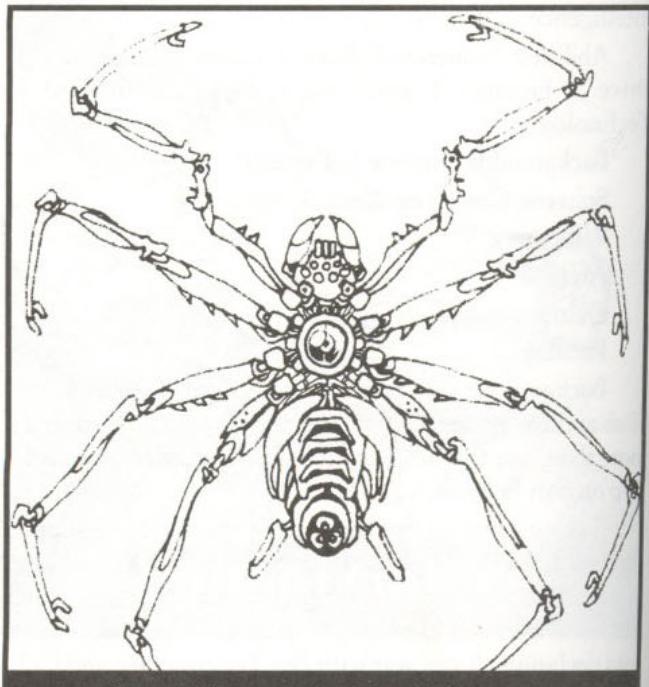
Willpower: 4

Arete: 5

Health Levels: OK, 0 (x3), -3 (x3), Splattered

Background: Neither solid nor liquid, Wyld Things are difficult to describe. Somehow they combine the consistency of protoplasm with the quickness of mercury. These blobs seem about three feet in diameter, though their shifting nature defies measurement.

As agents of chaos and change, Wyld Things create random entropic disruption. They may randomize events, warp inorganic matter (as per "Erode Matter") and mutate living flesh to cause cancerous growths. This latter effect



Pattern Spiders



Wyld Things

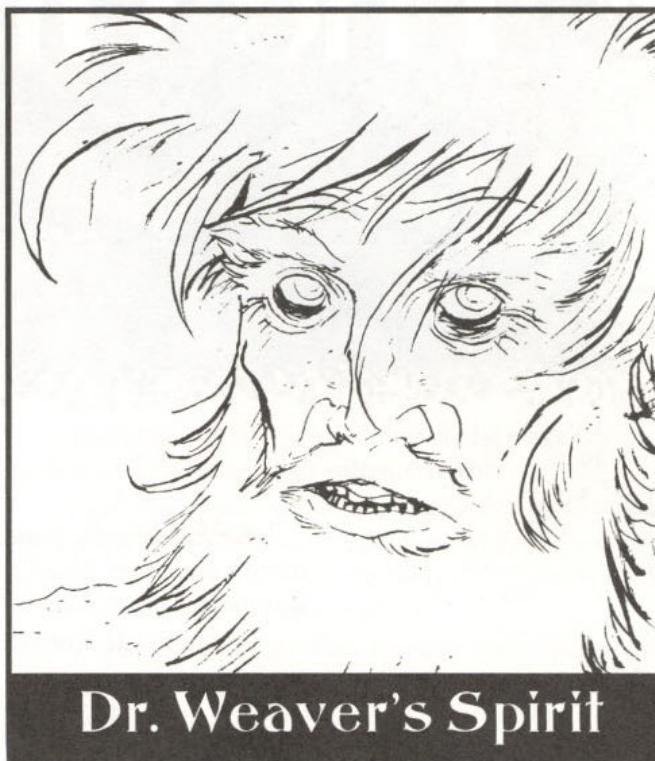
causes the loss of four Health Levels per success; it may be resisted by countermagick and Willpower. Wounds are considered aggravated.

Wyld Things' most frightening power is the ability literally to change another's mind. This Entropy effect randomly alters the victim's Nature. The duration of such "schizophrenia" depends on the amount of successes rolled against the target's current Willpower; one day per success, with semi-permanent changes possible if six or more successes are rolled. A botch scrambles the Umbrood's own mind for a similar amount of time.

Spirit of Dr. Weaver

Dr. Weaver appears as a gaunt man with wildly cropped, graying hair and beard. His features are faded and tinged with blue. His voice is soft, sad and somewhat hollow; a slight delay separates each telepathic sound and the movement of his incorporeal lips.

Dr. Weaver has been dead for just over two years. Like all lesser spirits, he manifests only where the Gauntlet is 4 or less. His ghost is intangible, immune to physical harm. Similarly, he cannot interact with the environment. Ignore Physical Attributes and Health Levels, though he loses one Health Level per turn of manifestation; this is caused by Paradox. Lacking a larynx, he communicates directly with others' minds.



Dr. Weaver's Spirit

Appendix Two: The Gift Deck

Earthshaking fire from the center of the earth will cause tremors around the New City. Two great rocks will war for a long time, then Arethusa will redden a new river.

— Michel de Nostradamus, 1556

This fictitious deck is based on the Major Arcana of a real Tarot Deck. Storytellers can utilize an actual deck to play out the fortune-telling scene, corresponding the number of the real card with the Gift Deck number. "IX. The Mage," for instance, matches "IX. The Hermit." Real Tarot cards, regular playing cards, or even die rolls can used for this reading.

Madame Cleo's card-reading provides background information, clues, and possible aid that the characters may later utilize. Each of the cards provides some hint to the undercurrent of fate that runs throughout the story, and may give perceptive players a glimpse at the overall picture.

Each card also carries a one-time magickal effect, Madame Cleo's gift to the mages fated to assist Norna Weaver. At any point in the story, these cards may be "played" by the character who receives them, thus giving that character a much-needed edge. Whether or not the cards' magick may be evoked after the events of **Loom of Fate** is up to you, but such is not advised.

Performing a Card-Reading

The card-reading in this story uses a simple three-card spread, suitable for a large group of players. You can always

invent variations (such as altered meaning for flipped cards) or adopt real Tarot-reading techniques.

First, have the querent (the subject of the reading) shuffle and cut the deck. Then take the deck and fan it out. The querent chooses three cards, one at a time, with her left hand, laying them down on the table from left to right.

The first card represents the inquirer's past; the second, her present condition; and the third, one of her possible futures. Cross-reference the specific card with its description below. Read off the appropriate interpretation, which varies depending on the card's position — past, present or future. (Note that in this story, the cards do not necessarily apply to individual characters; they may actually reflect a collective fate.)

Have the player mage retain the "Present" card (see Format below for an explanation). Return the others to the deck. Repeat the entire process for each character who participates.

If the Storyteller either does not have or does not want to use a Tarot deck, the following systems can substitute:

- A deck of playing cards; Ace to 10 of Hearts represent Cards I to X, Ace to 10 of Spades represent XI to XX, and the Joker fills in for XI.

- Die rolls may serve as well; two dice are rolled and the results are added together. Roll a third die, and if the result is a 1 or a 2, the Gaia card is drawn.

Format

Descriptions of each card follow a set format. This format and a brief explanation are outlined below.

Image: The card itself.

Meaning: Each card has a specific meaning, reference, and symbolism — again, identical to a standard Tarot deck. This explanation will help you use the Gift Deck in other stories.

Past: Only if this card turns up in the "Past" position should you read aloud the interpretation. Following this quote are notes to identify the reference. This usually reveals something of the story's background.

Present: If this card appears in the "Present" position, read aloud the interpretation. This refers to the querent's role in the story. He should keep this card, and may notice (Intelligence + Awareness; difficulty 4) that it is enchanted. At any point in the story, a mage can play his card and reap the benefits described. The card disappears as soon as it is played, and cannot be used again. All increases to Spheres last only one scene, but may temporarily exceed Arete.

Future: Read the interpretation aloud if this card turns up in the "Future" position. Because players are notoriously unpredictable, the notes provide a number of possible references. A Storyteller should manipulate events to fulfill the prophecy in some manner — and then draw attention to this fact.

The Cards

I. The Sleeper

Image: Top view of a bed, sleeper within.

Meaning: Refers to the querent's destiny. More specifically, it

applies to the human half of a mage, his Nature.

Past: "You were once a somnambulist, a sleepwalker. Now Awake to reality, you can never regain that innocence." This reminds the mage of his mortal heritage.

Present: "With knowledge comes power. With power comes responsibility." During this story, the character acts as though he were a Caretaker in addition to his normal Nature. Thus he regains Willpower in two ways. At the story's conclusion, the character may permanently switch to this Nature, if he wishes.

Future: "Ties to the mundane world prove too strong; with this millstone around your neck, you may drown in a stream of fate." This could refer to the character sacrificing Norna to maintain reality. Alternately, you could introduce a Sleeper acquaintance into the story; when she gets into trouble, the mage risks all to save her.

II. The Pure One

Image: A glowing white humanoid set against a starry background.

Meaning: Refers to a mortal's soul, the mage's Avatar. It describes the Essence of enlightenment.

Past: "In a previous life you visited this place to bask in the primordial springs. This was when change was healthy." This refers to the mage's Avatar, which has seen the Wylderness before its stagnation.

Present: "The Pure One seems to stare back at you, does it not? As if trying to explain its wishes. Adopt compatible goals, for two wills are better than one." During this story, the mage regains Willpower by conforming to Essence as well as Nature. Dynamic Avatars reward those who effect change on individuals or society. Avatars of Pattern reward those who maintain the status quo or reinforce patterns. Primordial Avatars reward those who overcomes personal problems, such as a fear, prejudice or flaw of Nature. Questing Avatars reward explorers of strange tangents and imaginative goals.

Future: "Conflict is the essence of any meeting between Pattern and Dynamism. A change will lead to stagnation; stability will cause great chaos." This means: If Norna Weaver and her Avatar are transformed into a pattern spider, the structure of reality will remain intact; her safety could result in the unraveling of reality.

III. The Wyld

Image: A swirling, psychedelic mass, gold predominating.

Meaning: Initiative and action, especially as brought about through the Sphere of Prime.

Past: "Fantastic beasts once roamed a coastal Wylderness. Civilization has driven them all into extinction." Self-explanatory.

Present: "At present, your life pattern is strongly woven into the fabric of reality. Your heartbeat echoes the power of the Dragon."

When played, this card grants an extra Sphere of Prime for that scene.

Future: "The unknowable return when you least expect. Though wild at heart and weird on top, they have a method to their madness." This speaks of the Marauder attacks, and hints at their plans for Norna (see Scenes Eight and Ten).

IV. The Weaver

Image: A spider hanging from a silver thread.

Meaning: The Weaver symbolizes stability and will-power.

Past: "The hunter sat in the shadow of civilization, crafting its mesh. The work finished, it flung the net over wild beasts." This refers to Cob and its binding of the Wylderness.

Present: "Remember Penelope and Odysseus of Ithaca. She fended off suitors for 10 long years by weaving, unravelling and reweaving a single cloth. He persevered throughout a perilous voyage to return home to his wife. Both accomplished their goals through patience and determination." By playing this card, the mage regains all lost Willpower.

Future: "You shall confront one who controls the uncontrollable. But remember that even the best-laid plans can go awry." This can refer to Dr. Himiitsu (with his genetic manipulation) or Merika Seth (and her weather control).

V. The Faerie

Image: A pixie sitting cross-legged on a mushroom.

Meaning: Inspiration, imagination, enlightenment, Arete.

Past: "Careful plans failed before the arrival of a young spirit — a source of inspiration." This refers to Dr. Himiitsu's failures before noticing Norna Weaver's powerful Avatar.

Present: "You are the seeker and the finder, a master of inductive reasoning and sudden realization. When all seems lost, wait for inspiration." When the mage plays this card, he gains one point of Arete for a single scene and temporarily escapes the need for one focus (his choice).

Future: "I see a bridge to other places, other times. In this place, people feed off the imagination of others, yet are

drained of their own creativity." This could refer to an art gallery or museum, which you may add to the story.

VI. The Kindred

Image: Two pale figures locked in an embrace, against a green background.

Meaning: Passion and the Sphere of Life.

Past: "The giver of false life has raised soulless husks. These hollow men have chased a Hollow One. These living dead have brought death to life. The blood on this card is still warm." This card links Men in Black with Dr. Himiitsu and hints at the death of Norna's mother.

Present: "Within your body, the four humors are in perfect moderation. Therefore, you empathize with others more easily, and

can recognize their own imbalance." This card increases the

Sphere of Life by one rank.

Future: "Be wary of the womb of man, the spawning ground of false life. Here your emotions will be sorely tested." This refers to the U.C. Medical Center and GeneTech Lab below (Scenes Thirteen and Fourteen, respectively). At the story's climax, mages must choose between Norna and maintaining reality.

VII. The Node

Image: Standing stones against a blue skyline.

Meaning: Triumph, protection by Providence. Nodes are often equated with mystic bridges, and therefore with the Sphere of Correspondence.

Past: "Workings on one level always affect results on another. The ebb and flow of the life-force draw from the will of the lives around it, and they draw from it in return." This relates to the push-and-pull between Dynamism and Pattern that forms the Quintessential nature of San Francisco.

Present: "All things are strung together by threads of cause and effect, sometimes invisible. Pull one and watch the corresponding connections unravel." By playing this card, the mage gains one rank in the Sphere of Correspondence.

Future: "Conflict centers upon a single point. Control of this Node determines who triumphs." The Node to which the card refers is the Wylderness.

VIII. Justice

Image: Its allegory, a woman with scales and a sword.

Meaning: Justice.

Past: "This time-stream was channelled by the imposition of law over freedom — the spread of a jurisdiction which was neither impartial nor balanced." This refers to the Technocracy's hold over the Wylderness.

Present: "When randomness is removed and impartiality introduced, one's abilities become the true measure."

A mage who plays this card removes a level of chance from that scene. This enhances the automatic success rule. Rather than a marginal success, he receives one full success for each die in the Dice Pool equal to or higher than the difficulty.

Future: "Destiny will be decided in a pinnacle of joint law. A tribunal will pass judgment on one, and thus many, but bring justice to none." This passage refers to the Symposium that the Technocracy will hold in the Union Law Office (Scene Nine). There Dr. Himiitsu will gain his colleagues' approval to transform Norna Weaver.

IX. The Mage

Image: A gray-robed old man with staff and lantern.

Meaning: Wisdom, prudence, the Sphere of Mind.

Past: "This city was founded by learned men. These men have a mission, to teach those they deemed ignorant. Sadly, their study of this region helped define it." This refers to the foundation of San Francisco.

Present: "Like the mage, your knowledge is your power. Outthink your enemies. Better yet, second-guess them." This card increases the Sphere of Mind by one rank.

Future: "In a place of study and research will you find the answers you seek." This could refer to the U.C. Medical Center (Scene Thirteen) or GeneTech Lab (Scene Fourteen).

X. The Wheel of Fortune

Image: A purple wheel. The three women hanging from the spokes represent the Norns (or Fates).

Meaning: Destiny, karma, fate. These subjects are intimately linked to the Sphere of Time.

Past: "Your destiny is determined in another time and place, but fulfilled in the material world." This refers to how Quintessence shapes — and is shaped by — human life and perception.

Present: "Your destiny is interwoven with that of others on a vast Loom of Fate. Should you become entangled, only a quick snip will separate you; by tugging away, you might unravel the fabric." By playing this card, the mage gains one rank in the Sphere of Time.

Future: "Beware the Agents of Fortune, masters of the Dynamic." This refers to the Marauder attack in Scene Eight.

XI. Force

Image: An orange lightning bolt.

Meaning: Strength, force.

Past: "Two great rocks have warred for a long time. But primordial forces wear down static pattern." This refers to conflict between the Wylderness and Cob's web.

Present: "Feel the almost-imperceptible tremors beneath your feet; sense the lightning in the air. They portend

a time of violent change. Base your actions on these signs." This card increases Forces by one rank.

Future: "This card recalls the prophesies of Nostradamus: 'Earthshaking fires from the center of the earth will cause tremors around the New City.'" One possible future, in which Norna survives, could find San Francisco destroyed by earthquake, fire and riot.

XII. The Haunt

Image: A white ghost rising from a body.

Meaning: Sacrifice, ordeal.

Past: "In the recent past, one mage suffered an ordeal that sacrificed his soul; in the near future, another will be subjected to a similar ordeal, a similar sacrifice." This refers to the failed transformation of Reverend Williams and the proposed attempt on Norna Weaver.

Present: "You can see through the shadow separating idea from reality." When played, this card increases the mage's Sphere of Spirit by one rank.

Future: "Be wary of spirits that cross between worlds, however familiar they may seem. Your future is filled with great sacrifice." The first line refers to either the ghost of Norna's father (appearing in Scene Seven) or other spirits. The second refers once again to the story's climax.

XIII. Death

Image: The Grim Reaper, decapitating a man with his scythe.

Meaning: Death

Past: "One mortal discovered the secret of life; his reward was death." This refers to Dr. Weaver's death at the hands of Dr. Himiitsu after learning of Project: Reincarnate.

Present: "It is not yet your time to die. Still, do not tempt Death." When played, this card restores all the mage's Health Levels.

Future: "I see the dead laid out in orderly rows, as if a formation of soldiers had been struck by a sudden plague. Avoid this place, lest you join them." This refers to Lincoln Cemetery (Scene Seven).

XIV. The Talisman

Image: Some sort of bizarre device.

Meaning: Temperance, economy, moderation. The Sphere of Matter.

Past: "In the past, a humble seer had images drawn so all could see their future." This refers to Madame Cleo's Gift Deck, a minor Talisman created by a fellow mage at Doissetep.

Present: "You are a tool in another's hand. Seek moderation between the worker and his work." This card raises the mage's Sphere of Matter by one rank.

Future: "A talisman lies within your grasp." This hints at the enchanted nature of the Gift Deck.

XV. The Wyrm

Image: A black snake or dragon.

Meaning: Disease, great strength. Refers to a character's attributes.

Past: "Your enemy fell from grace and was bound by chains of material folly. Yet this thrall became Master. Otherwise formidable, its weakness lay in a lack of spirituality." By referring to the Technocracy's rise to power, these lines identify the mages' enemy.

Present: "As Sword of Vengeance, you must fight the many evils of this world. Strike quickly, strongly and relentlessly." When played, this card raises one of the mage's Attributes to 5 for a single scene.

Future: "You will come to a prison where the First Horseman suffers continual torture. The jailer even now does battle with the Fourth." These lines refer to the U.C. Medical Center (where disease is combated), and to Dr. Himiitsu (a Master of Life). Scene Thirteen describes this setting.

XVI. The Dark Tower

Image: A crumbling, black tower.

Meaning: Ruin, deception. The Sphere of Entropy.

Past: "After much strife, one army triumphed. A multitude of towers became prison to the vanquished, who were soon forgotten." San Francisco imprisoned the Wylderness. Most Technomancers are ignorant of its existence.

Present: "You are like Nidhogg, the dragon gnawing on the roots of the World Tree Yggdrasil. Hidden from sight, you topple the greatest of structures." This card supplies one rank in the Sphere of Entropy.

Future: "Unforeseen disaster lies hidden upon high. Destruction of the human mind awaits those who proudly penetrate the sacred mysteries." The first line may refer to Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill (Scene Eleven), or the Union Law Office (Scene Nine). The second indicates a bout of Quiet, referred to in the introduction to Chapter Four.

XVII. The Spheres

Image: Nine spheres; blue (Correspondence), purple (Time), red-orange (Force), green (Life), gray (Mind), silver-white (Spirit), gold (Prime), black (Entropy), and brown (Matter).

Meaning: Hope, faith, truth revealed. The magick of Spheres.

Past: "Just as heavenly bodies move perpetually across the sky, grand plans and weighty magicks were recently set in motion; they may be nigh impossible to stop." This refers to the designs of Dr. Himiitsu and the Technocracy.

Present: "Though out of your depth, you may still succeed by trusting in greater powers." When played, this

card subtracts one from the difficulty of all magick tests for one scene.

Future: "Someone will soon trust the traitor. Another will betray the believer. But this betrayal will lead to hope renewed." Both Reverend Williams and Merika Seth are traitors to their calling. Norna's trust in Williams and the clone of her mother both lead to her betrayal. Still, if she embraces her fate at the end of the story, Norna becomes a vehicle of hope for the entire city.

XVIII. The Garou

Image: A man and a wolf, both howling at the moon.

Meaning: Danger, false friends. A person's demeanor.

Past: "I have seen a wolf in shepherd's clothing. He planned to lead a member of his flock to slaughter." This refers to Reverend Williams and his attempted abduction of Norna.

Present: "You seem to get under everyone's skin, and see the nature of the beast within." From now until the end of the story, the mage can detect another's inner Nature with a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 7). By changing his own Demeanor to match, he can better relate; lower the difficulty of Social rolls by the number of successes attained.

Future: "Danger lurks in the most unlikely places. A false friend will prove one's downfall." This could refer to a number of things: Dr. Himiitsu's overtures of friendship (Scene Eleven); the character's sacrifice of Norna Weaver; or some other false friend. It could also refer to the Garou caern that safeguards the Cataclysm.

XIX. The Mummy

Image: A mummy before a pyramid, sun above.

Meaning: Marriage, happiness, wealth, those Backgrounds that tie a mage to the mundane world.

Past: "Arranged by Fate herself, two parties entered into a marriage of convenience. Both prospered." This refers to Cob and the Technomancers.

Present: "Though many travel toward a similar destination, you must serve as guide." Once dealt this card, the mage immediately gains Destiny 1 (or raises an already existing Destiny by 1). This lasts until he fulfills his fate by the story's conclusion.

Future: "An old acquaintance, long forgotten, will return to aid you. A new friend, recently recognized, will propose a happy union." The Storyteller is on his own with this one. She should introduce a significant non-player character into the story — perhaps an Ally, Mentor, or mundane relation. The second line could refer to a relationship or business deal, or to a sudden savior mage from the House of Quodosch. Again, the exact meaning lies within the Storyteller's domain.

XX. The Ascension

Image: Butterfly leaving a cocoon, caterpillar nearby.
Ascension.

Past: "One has undergone a transformation, a change for the worse imperiling the evolution of his soul." This refers to Reverend Williams' corruption.

Present: "This card mirrors your soul. Listen to that inner voice for guidance, for enlightenment." Sometime after the card-reading, the mage's Avatar contacts him. Even if the mage lacks enough experience to raise Arete, the Seeking can begin immediately. There are two hitches, however. First, each Avatar has its own agenda: Dynamic Avatars hope to release the Wylderness; Avatars of Pattern Essence try to protect Cob and its Pattern Web; Primordial Avatars want Norna to survive at all costs; Questing Avatars insist upon watching and learning rather than taking action. Second, the Seeking must continue into other stories until the mage reaches further enlightenment.

Future: "The future holds great change, for an individual as well as the world. The nature of this transformation is unclear." This could refer to Norna Weaver, the unraveling of reality in San Francisco, or even the Ascension to which Weaver may guide San Francisco.

XXI. Gaia

Image: The globe; other planets revolve around it.

Meaning: Success, harmony, attainment. Quintessence.

Past: "Mystic beings were once attracted to the Wylderness, like bees buzzing about a garden, like wolves circling prey, like ravens wheeling above carrion." This describes the Wylderness before being smothered by the Technocrats.

Present: "This card represents a portion of the horde which lies buried beneath the ground, guarded by a many-headed hydra. You are charged with its recovery." This card stores five Quintessence, which the mage can use at any time.

Future: "Through harmony shall you attain success." Is this the harmony of Ascension, the Path that Weaver may follow if Norna embraces her fate? Or is it the spirit of cooperation between the players, which might lead them to succeed? Perhaps the success here refers to Free Will, the untying of the binding threads of destiny.

SAN FRANCISCO

Fisherman's Wharf

SAN
FRANCISCO
BAY

One Mile

PACIFIC
OCEAN

Ocean Beach

N

GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE



GeneTech Lab

Hanging Clone Tanks

10 Yards

Graphics Elements Copyright 1993 by Brian J. Blume

5
Feet

Graphics Elements Copyright 1993 by Brian J. Blume

NEIGHBORING APARTMENT

NEIGHBORING
APARTMENT



BALCONY

LIVING
ROOM

BEDROOM

BATH

STUDY

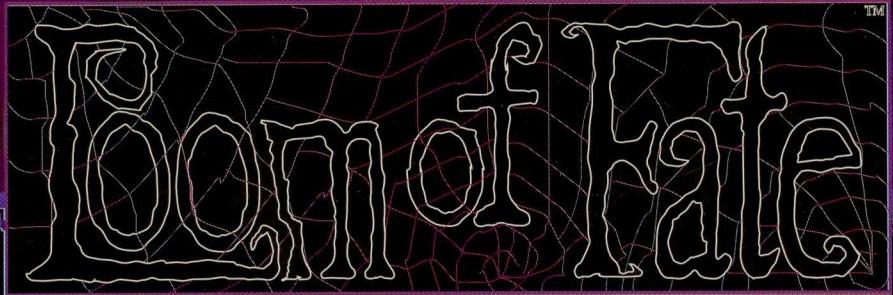
Seth's Apartment

N

DINING ROOM

KITCHEN

HALL



Free Will or Fate?

The future of San Francisco hangs by a thread,
The thread of Cob, weaver of the Pattern Web.
One scared, gifted girl holds the key to the city.

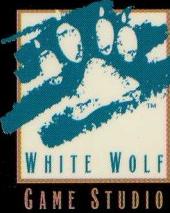
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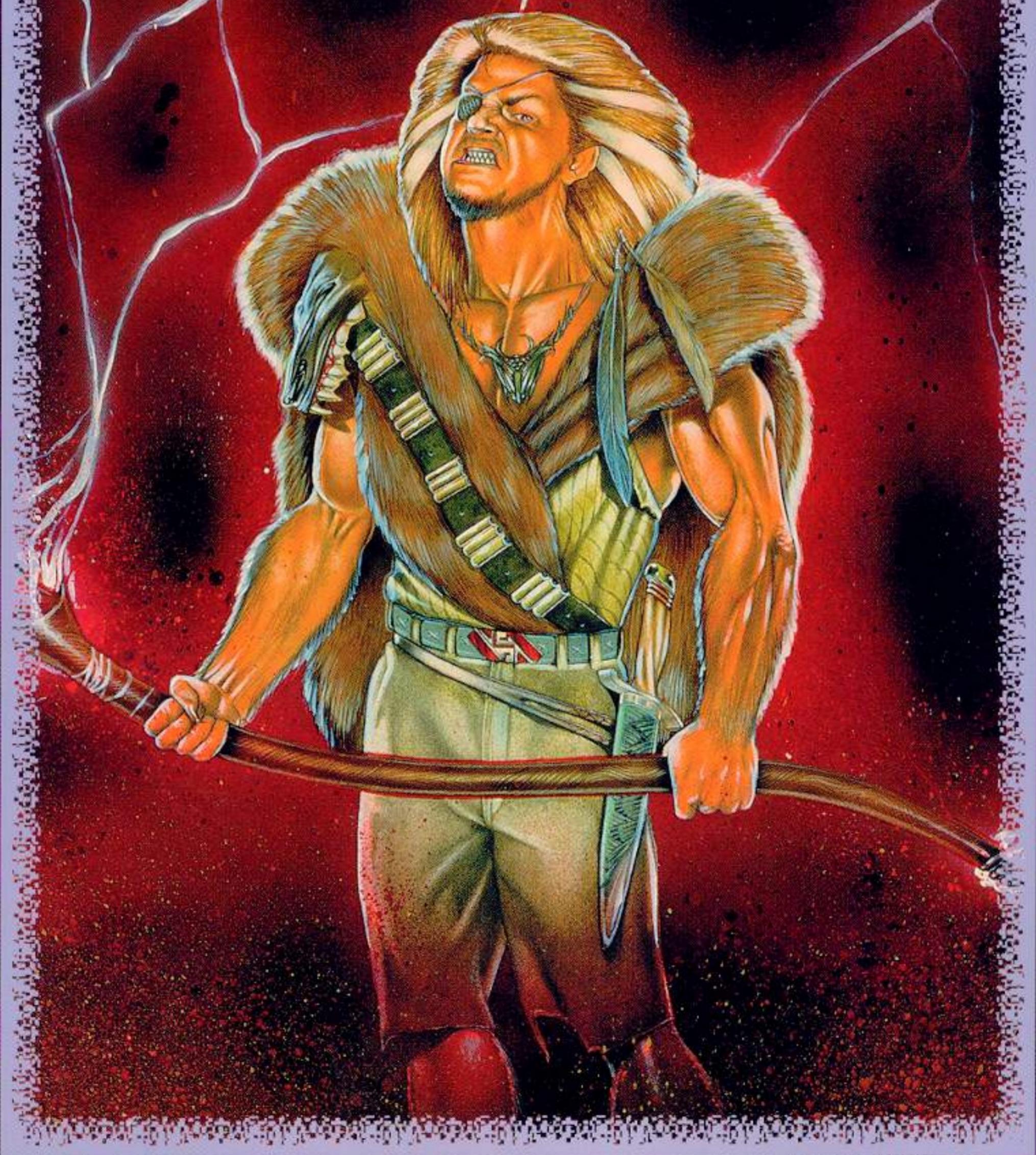


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THE

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F A C T O R ™



An Epic Adventure for the World of Darkness™



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Rob "How Childish" Hatch, the cool eye of the Arrowstorm.

Mike "Multi-Task" Tinney, for biting it all off and chewing vigorously. Oh, well, someone has to drink all that coffee...

Ian "Number 9" Lemke, for sleepwalking into Dr. Caligari's cabinet (and breaking Bill's).

Andrew "Coach" Greenberg, for taking on the Bad News Wolves.

Stewart "Ghost Book" Wieck, for conjuring substance where there was none, then disappearing upon command.

Ken "Stalag 17" Cliffe, for building the Dog Pen of Doom.

Jennifer "Velveeta Factor" Hartshorn, for sifting the brie from the Cheese Whiz.

Phil "Thunder!" Brucato, for rattling walls, brains, and minions of evil.

Brian "Rat Daddy" Campbell, for his furry new officemate.



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Special thanks also to Andrew Greenberg, Bill Bridges, Phil Brucato, Sam Chupp and Mark Rein-Hagen for their patient assistance with the numerous questions involved in writing The Chaos Factor. And, of course, thanks to my wife, Bonnie Moore, for her patience and support — I'd be lost without you. Thanks also, for so very much, to Margaret Blanton. God keep you well, dear lady. You'll be missed.



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Prologue: A Day in the Life

By James A. Moore



Samuel Haight set down the ancient tome and rubbed his tired eyes. Despite his physical exhaustion, he felt elated. Fifteen volumes of text, and finally he had the clue he had been looking for — a clue to the location of one of the oldest of Kindred. Haight stood, stretched muscles that much preferred hard activity to sitting still, and left his private study.

Making sure that all of his security systems were in place took several minutes, but you can never be too safe when you're a wanted man. Haight knew that he was hunted, knew that several mages and virtually all Garou wanted him dead. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered but winning. Nothing mattered but proving that his father had been wrong. He could accomplish anything, as long as he took the time to plan out every possible contingency.

The mages had him worried. Theoretically, they could go back in time and destroy him before he had Awakened. He knew that most of them wouldn't even consider the idea, but there were a few who would actually do the deed if they had the opportunity. It just couldn't be allowed — he had come too far in his plans to permit anyone to stop him. Haight pondered the colossal consequences of his plans should they succeed. Imagining every Garou on the planet dead was a treat; having them die at his hands would be ecstasy.

Samuel Haight stepped into the shower and set the water to scalding. Without a second's hesitation, he stepped into the steaming torrent and winced as the heat turned his skin red. He washed himself thoroughly, using homemade soap and rough burlap. His skin bled, protesting the vicious treatment. When he was done, he dried himself with another piece of coarse fabric. Pain was good for the soul, a reminder that life was harsh and had to be met on its own terms. Samuel Haight refused to meet life in any other way.

Finally, after finishing with the mundane daily routines, Samuel Haight prepared himself for the future. An hour was spent cleaning and preparing his firearms; another was spent sharpening knives that already rivaled most razors. During the entire process, Samuel Haight's mind was blank; every step was preprogrammed, hard-wired into his mind on a level that was almost instinctual. Finally, Haight stared at the two Bowie knives, each silver-plated blade a foot and a half in length, each handle carved from the bone of his enemies, the Garou. Each blade forged by his own hands and baptized in the blood of the werewolves.

The memories were sweet: the flash of silver and the screams of pain, the feeling of blood washing over his hands and, yes, even the feeling of his own flesh being sliced by claws that could rend steel. He had just been a man back then, just as capable of dying as the next person, just as weak and vulnerable. All of that had changed. He was so much more these days. Haight forced his mind away from the desire to feel godlike — power was only a tool to be used, not an integral part of him. The temptation was strong after so many successes, but he realized a bullet through the brain would kill him as surely as it would kill one of his enemies. Still, the ability to alter the very fabric of reality was a heady sensation, even when one considered the risks.

Lack of sleep caught up with him; when he was aware of his surroundings again, he stood in front of the living room's mirrored wall, blood running down his chest, painting his blue jeans a glossy black. He held his knives, one in each hand, and felt the warm blood wash over his hands. He stared at his own reflection and smiled. His reflection smiled back, noting with satisfaction the deep cuts that ran across his chest. The razor-thin wounds were always in the same spot, straight through the heavy scar tissue that repeated slashes had made. The same spots where his first Garou kill's claws had once raked him for his insolence.

Sam went back to his study and removed the last of the vials from their hiding place in the wall. The vampire's blood was dark, a rich crimson explosion in his mouth. As always, the wounds on his chest disappeared, returning in the form of freshly healed scars. Vitality rushed into Samuel Haight, washing the threat of his true years away and giving him the energy to shrug off his last 48 hours without sleep. "Back to the books, old boy. Time's a wastin'."

Haight started in again, looking over the ancient Book of Nod. So much information, all of it in ancient rhymes and archaic puzzles. Fortunately, Samuel Haight loved puzzles. The hours passed quickly, and when he stopped, he was certain that he was correct: all of the clues pointed to Mexico City. His mind reeled at the possibilities: If a young vampire's blood could give him so much, what might the blood of an Antediluvian do for him?

He'd have to be very careful in Mexico City. It was by far one of the most dangerous cities he had ever passed through. Calcutta was bad, real bad, but he'd be hard pressed to say which was really worse. Next to Mexico City and Calcutta, New York City was a quaint little suburb.

The initial rush from the Kindred Vitae was wearing off, and Sam felt exhaustion creeping his way again. He slipped up the stairs, checking along the way that no one had entered his home. No one had.

Sleep came quickly, with hurricane force, and carried Samuel Haight into his own nightmares again. He awoke hours later in a cold sweat, an apology on his lips. Haight shivered in the morning's chill, the shrill screech of his alarm clock having saved him from the worst parts of old, familiar dreams. Sometimes fate was kind.

The day's work began in earnest. Haight set his mind to the tasks at hand, packing his bags with what little he needed to take with him, and calling several people in different locations. For Mexico City, he would need all the help he could get.

The next two days passed in a flurry of activity, as he gathered his forces and laid out his plans. The only breaks he gave himself were time to sleep and to eat. He kept sleep to a minimum; every night the dreams returned, and fate was no longer kind.

Haight made a long distance call on the final day. A soft voice, heavy with regret and lost chances, picked up after the third ring. "Hello?"

"Diane? Hi, it's me, Sam. I just wanted to call, see if everything's all right with you and Gabriel." They talked for a few minutes more, then Haight snapped himself out of his temporary peace of mind and said his good-byes. "Listen," he said, "I'll try to make it there around Christmas time, but I can't make any guarantees. I just wanted to make sure that everything was okay, and to hear your voice. Take care of yourself Diane." Before she could respond, before he could let himself be tempted to fall in love with her again, he slammed the phone down. There was no time for the past. The future meant too much.

The staff from the Crombey farm's World Tree leaned against a wall. The blood-red wood glowed with a rich luster. His father's

skull perched at its top, laced in place by silver threads. Having the focus of so much bitterness as a part of his greatest weapon was a sweet irony that Haight could not resist. The eyes of the skull had been filled by large black stones, taken from the Hollow Ones whose Chantry he'd called home. The young mages wouldn't begrudge him the stones. The Apocalypse had come early for them.

The heavy weight of the staff was reassuring, glowing with Quintessence, potent in ways that a gun could never hope to equal. Guns, knives, magick and worse—he was as ready as he would ever be, as ready as he needed to be to deal with an Antediluvian.

He dialed the phone one last time as he stepped towards the front door. The operator answered almost immediately. "911. What is the nature of your emergency?"

"Hi. My house is about to blow up. Have a nice day."

Three blocks away, Haight pushed the button on his remote detonator and turned the former Chantry into a crater. The fireball was a glorious thing, alive with destructive power. He knew just how it felt.

Samuel Haight's serene expression hid the laughter that screamed through his mind. Even past the approaching sirens, he could hear the laughter echoing. In another realm of reality, the laughter was heard by others. They too laughed to think of the chaos that would soon be near.

The seventh day of October was a bright one for Samuel Haight. If the rest of the month went as well, his dreams of revenge would be complete. It was good to be alive.





Introduction

*I was up above it
Now I'm down in it
Well shut up so what does it matter now
I was swimming in the haze
Now I crawl on the ground
And everything I never liked about you
Is kind of seeping into me*
— Nine Inch Nails, “Down In It”



The Chaos Factor is a book in two parts. Part One is a mini-sourcebook for Mexico City: the capital of the Sabbat in the Americas, a stronghold for the Technocracy, and one of the most Wyrm-corrupt locations in the World of Darkness.

Due to space limitations, it would be impossible to accurately portray every supernatural character in Mexico City. The city holds over 200 vampires, 60 werewolves and 20 mages; the Storyteller is encouraged to read through the sourcebook thoroughly and make whatever additions best fit to customize her city. Mexico City as presented is hardly a complete listing; by adding new elements, you make the city richer and more accessible to your chronicle.

Mood: The primary mood in Mexico City is dark and paranoid. The supernaturals in Mexico City are aware of each other, and not very happy about what they see. The mages are deathly afraid of the Garou, and suspicious of every violent action that takes place. Likewise, the mages are worried about just what the Sabbat are after, and angry that the Sabbat run so freely through the city.

The werewolves seem set on killing everyone they see, but are cautious, sneaking through the gutters and hiding from sight. No one knows for certain just how many werewolves live in the city, and the werewolves aren't telling. Just when the rest of the supernaturals think they understand what is going on among the Garou, the werewolves suddenly turn around and attack the same people they were protecting the day before.

The vampires are mad, flaunting their immortality and doing as they please with no regard for anyone, save themselves. The Sabbat seem to fear nothing, save the forces that dwell within the Church.

And through it all, the Society of Leopold watches, making notes and planning for the future...

Theme: The Theme of Mexico City's sourcebook is hope. Mexico City is a corrupt megalopolis, overflowing with the seedy refuse of the World of Darkness. The Camarilla, the Garou and the Traditions are unwelcome here. By all reason, there should be no hope surviving in this den of evil. Yet through the battles for supremacy, the forces that oppose the vile rulers of Mexico City continue to fight back in small ways. Despite inescapable odds, hope struggles on and even gains small victories where only defeat seems possible.

The second book in *The Chaos Factor* is the cross-over adventure by the same name. "The Chaos Factor" involves Samuel Haight's final bid for power and the players' best chance to stop his mad schemes forever.

Mood: The mood for "The Chaos Factor" is, quite simply, chaos — the chaos unleashed by a man grown too powerful for his own good. Haight desperately wants to find his prize and avoid being captured; to that end, he deliberately sets the supernatural factions in Mexico City at each other's throats. The result is grand bloodshed.

Theme: In "The Chaos Factor," we see the results of one man's quest for ultimate power and how that quest can affect the World of Darkness. Samuel Haight falls under the influence of his own hubris, and the world may well fall with him. The theme of "The Chaos Factor," then, is simply the evil that one man can do.

Two appendices at the back of this book hold important statistics and facts for the Storyteller to consider before starting this adventure. Optional rules for including wraiths, and, more importantly, the effects of Paradox throughout the story are both included. The second appendix also includes new rules for integrating Mage, Vampire and Werewolf.

Suggested Reading

Love and Rockets (comic) — The collected works of the Hernandez Brothers, particularly the "Heartbreak Soup" tales of Palomar, are very useful for capturing the feel of Paraiso Vista.

There are several books about the Aztecs, mostly dissertations about past excavations and known historical facts. The single best volume for easy reading and comprehension is **GURPS: Aztecs**, from Steve Jackson Games.

National Geographic has published several articles on both the history of and the living conditions in Mexico City. There are few better sources for understanding the complexities of modern life in Mexico. Most of these articles can be found at your local library and range over the last two decades. A wealth of new material has appeared in



Spanish Pronunciations

Spanish is a very phonetic language, so almost every word used in the language is pronounced exactly as it is spelled.

Examples:

Huitzilopochtli — HU-eet-zee-LO-pok-tlee

Harzomatuili — Har-ZO-maht-oo-eel-ee

Tenochtitlan — Ten-ok-tee-tlan

In cases where two vowels are placed together, each vowel is pronounced separately. The only true exception to this rule is when U and I are placed together following the letter Q.

Example: Quintanaroo — Keen-Tah-Nah-RO-O

Most of the Aztec words as we know them are simply Spanish approximations of Aztec names. The author has used several reference books in an attempt to find the "proper" pronunciation for each word and title.

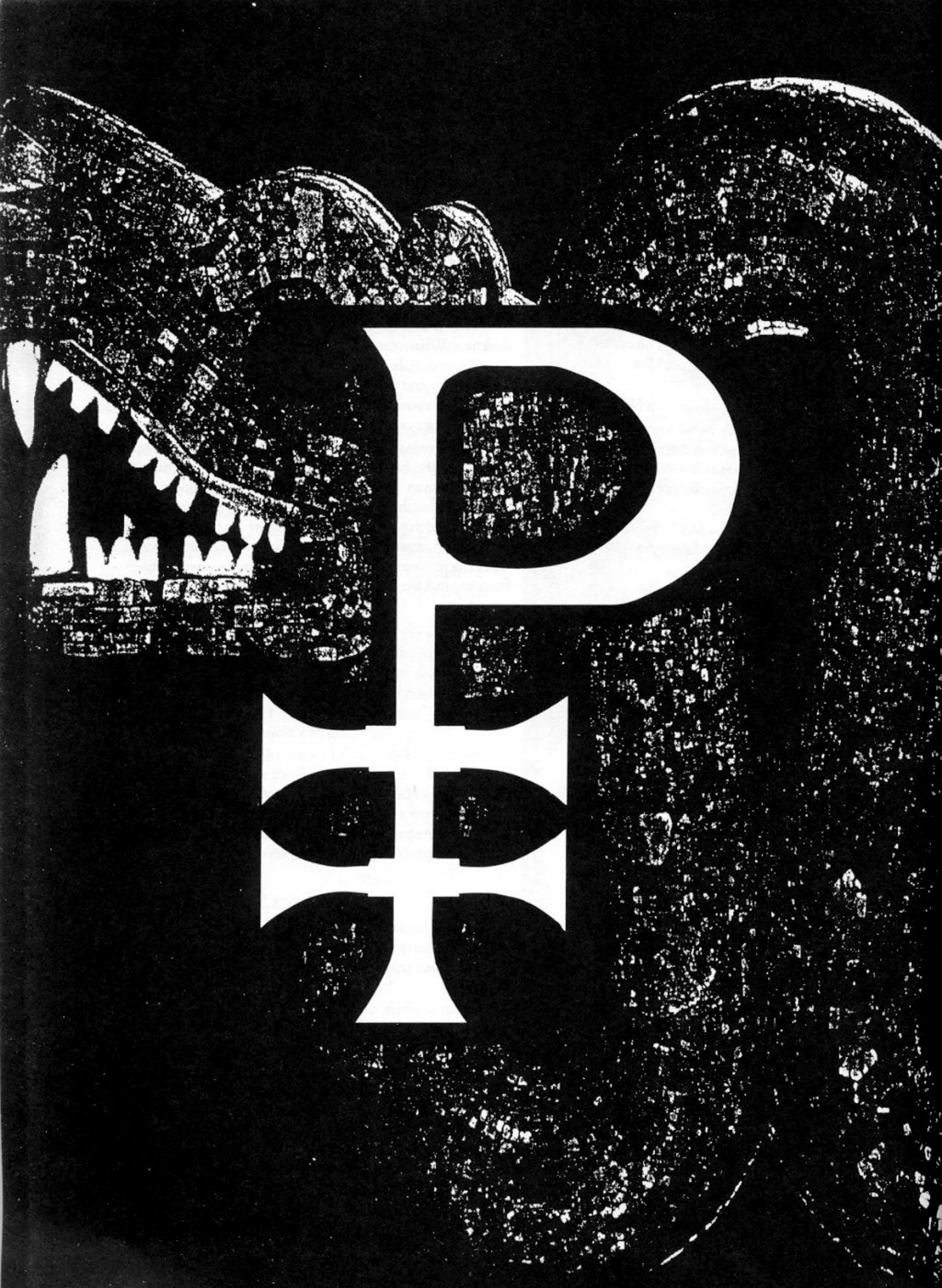
Example: Motecuzoma — Mo-Tek-U-zO-ma is more commonly referred to as Montezuma.

recent months as a result of NAFTA's passing and the recent civil uprising. These articles rarely present the U.S. in the most flattering of terms. There are, however, reasons for this...

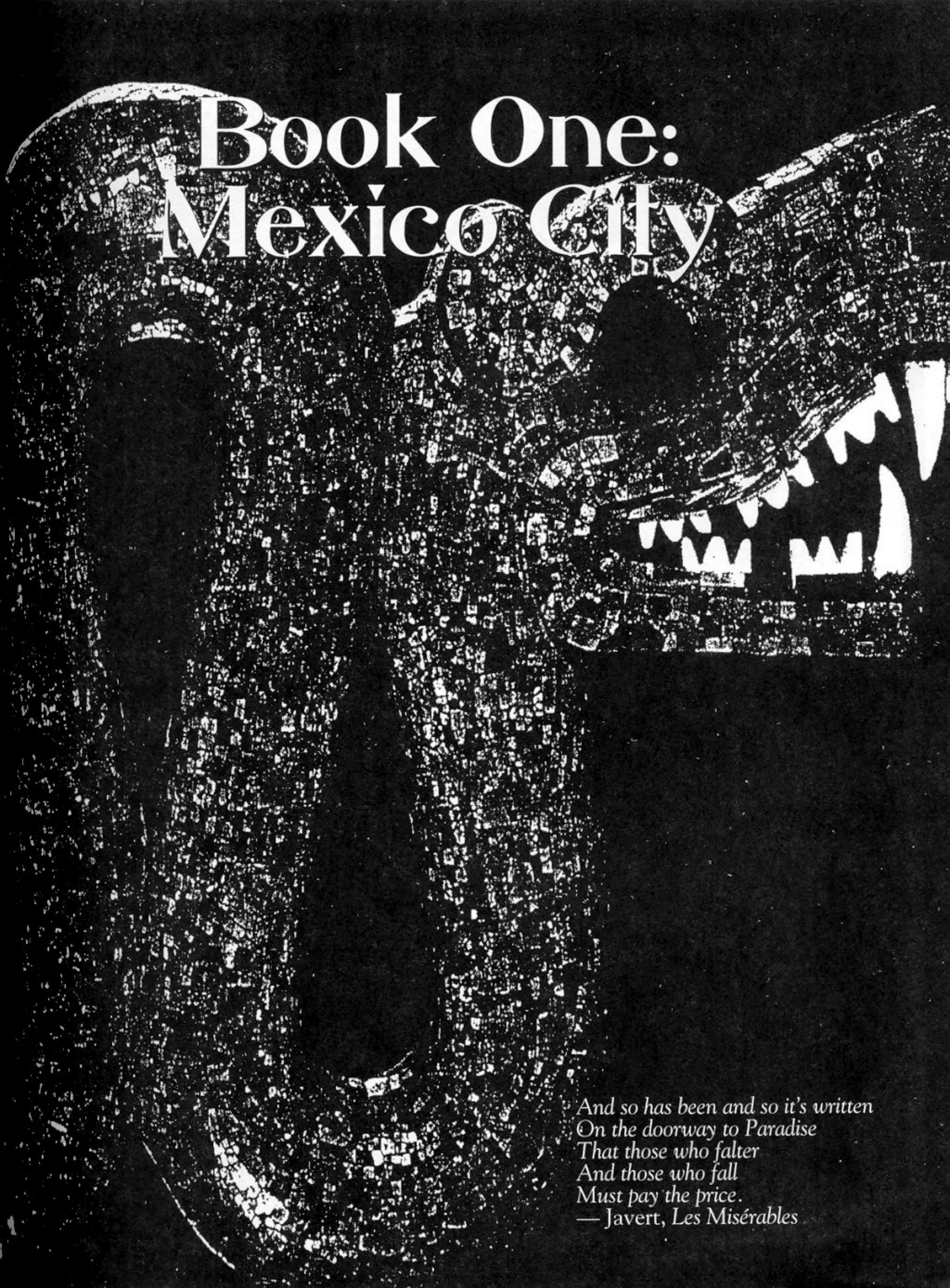
While *The Chaos Factor* presents the darkest aspects of Mexico City and adds many fictional miseries as well, indescribable pollution, overcrowding and poverty exist there just the same. The lot of the average Mexican citizen is beyond anything we North Americans can imagine. This is worth considering the next time you complain about a leaky roof or broken air conditioner.

The World of Darkness is just that — a world of darkness. When researching *The Chaos Factor*, the author aimed specifically at the darkest aspects of life in modern day Mexico and in the Aztec history. The facts have not been exaggerated, but the gentle aspects of life have sometimes been ignored.

Aside from their time as a powerful conquering force, the Aztecs also had many beautiful ceremonies that did not involve human sacrifice or conquest. Before judging the Aztecs too harshly, readers should learn a bit more about the Aztecs' diverse and powerful culture. In the same place and time, human history tells us that many other cultures would have acted the same way, and in many cases cultures from around the world have done far worse, with far less reason.



Book One: Mexico City



And so has been and so it's written
On the doorway to Paradise
That those who falter
And those who fall
Must pay the price.
— Javert, *Les Misérables*



Chapter One: History and Geography

*But you, children of space, you restless in rest, you shall not
be trapped nor tamed.*

Your house shall not be an anchor but a mast...

You shall not dwell in tombs made by the dead for the living.

— Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*



Few cities in the Gothic Punk world seem more corrupt and polluted than Mexico City. Under the domination of uncaring corporations, ruthless politicians and the Sabbat, Mexico is like an open wound on Mother Earth, a stain across the Tapestry.

Despite a long legacy of oppression, poverty and despair, however, Mexico still stands as a monument to hope. Amid the blood-stained shadows of the world's most populated city, old

ghosts whisper of the eternal spirit of the Mexican people. Pride struggles against hopelessness, faith against fear. An ancient evil has poisoned the city, but a time of change may be at hand. The events during this year's Days of the Dead may determine whether Mexico City awakens into new hope or continues to slide into oblivion.

Part One of this chapter describes the history of the city from a first-hand view. Part Two outlines major points of interest here, including the secret undercity, the Underbelly of the Wyrm.

Part One: Whispering Ghosts

*Will I leave only this:
Like the flowers that wither?
Will nothing last in my name—
Nothing of my fame here on earth?
At least flowers! At least songs!*

—Anonymous Aztec composer, A.D. 1519, "Songs of Heuxotzingo"

The Dark History of Mexico City



I was there when Huitzilopochtli walked out of the ocean's waters and onto the land. I knew when the time came for him to make his presence known. He walked boldly across the surface of the land, following an impulse that only he could hope to understand.

I saw how powerful Huitzilopochtli was, how he claimed the Aztecs as his own and forced them to worship him. The Aztecs came originally from Aztlan — the place of the Herons — an area far to the northwest of Tenochtitlan. Aztlan was built in the center of a lake, and for many generations the Aztec peoples were content to stay in their area, untouched by the rest of the world. The mage Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, led them in peace and plenty for countless centuries before leaving them behind. He promised that he would return one day, to save his people from whatever troubles might befall them. Powerful signs of change were in the air, and the Serpent traveled to find the source of the changes he sensed, even from his place on another continent. The powerful mage rode a seething raft of snakes from the North American continent all the way to Europe, and learned to his dismay that the world was indeed changing, and that the changes had been brought about by what is now referred to as the Technocracy.

The New God

With Quetzalcoatl out of the way, Huitzilopochtli decided the time was right to seize power. There was a man, a great warrior of the Aztlan, who actually bore the name Huitzilopochtli. This man died at the hands of his impersonator. The great warrior begged for mercy, and in its place felt the steel-hard hands of his new god ripping the heart from his chest.

In A.D. 1116, the people of Aztlan were summoned by the being who would become their god of war. He was a powerful being, more than capable of crushing the mightiest human with only one hand. He demanded both sacrifices and loyalty from them. Huitzilopochtli commanded the Aztecs to move with him. Too terrified to disobey, the Aztecs and several other tribes moved on, following behind their new god and, later, other gods as well. All other tribes were allowed to stop their wanderings further north, but the Aztecs were forced onward by Huitzilopochtli.

For over 200 years before their arrival in the valley, the Aztecs became a nomadic tribe, eating what they could forage and making sacrifices to their gods. Under the leadership of Huitzilopochtli, the once-peaceful people became a warrior race, conquering all that came before them

and suffering few defeats along the way. Huitzilopochtli showed the gentle farmers how to fight and how to kill. He showed them the best ways to forge weapons, and the best ways to use them. He made them see power in the deaths of their enemies, and many followed him eagerly.

In A.D. 1321, the first group of Aztecs wandered to the Mexico Valley, trying desperately to find a place to call their own. One of the leaders of the Aztec tribe, Tenoch, saw an eagle perched on a cactus, devouring a snake, and took this as a sign from Huitzilopochtli that they had at last found a home. Before long, a city was built near the shore of the greatest lake in the area, Lake Texcoco, and within a few decades the Aztecs had built their great city, Tenochtitlan. This city was built both on the land and on the surface of the lake. The Aztecs needed more land to build on, and large rafts of earth were designed and anchored together across Texcoco in order to grow more crops and to house more people as the Aztec Empire grew.

Conquest

Even using the lake to increase the size of the lands, the Aztecs still did not have enough space for all of their tribe. Within a decade they had resumed their previous ways, conquering as many of the nearby tribes as possible. The first hereditary king of the Aztecs, Acamapichtli, was responsible for the conquests of four other city-states during his reign alone. The war god soon realized where the biggest threat to his power lay; Huitzilopochtli ordered the execu-

tion of all shape-changers, and the Garou and Bastet were driven from the land. In the span of the next two centuries, the Aztec Empire grew in power spreading from the Mexico Valley and drawing whole tribes into its folds. Fealties were paid to the Aztecs by the conquered tribes. The only protection for a tribe that faced the Aztec Nation came in the form of silver, rare spices, slaves and human sacrifices. Wherever members of the changing races were found, they were slaughtered or driven into retreat.

Throughout those 200 years, Huitzilopochtli guided his chosen people, rewarding them with rich crops for their sacrifices in his name, and feasting on the souls of Aztec sacrifices in his honor.

As the power of the Aztecs grew, so grew the power of their gods as well. Above them all stood Huitzilopochtli, often allowing the other gods greater glory and credit, but always driving the Aztecs further and further in search of food for themselves and blood sacrifices for their deities. Many of the deities of the peoples conquered by the Aztec Nation were adopted into the Aztecs' own beliefs. Many more were not, and even the smallest traces of these dark gods were ordered destroyed by Huitzilopochtli. The goddesses Malinalxochitl and Coyolxauhqui were only two of the gods who were defeated and expelled. By the order of Huitzilopochtli, anyone worshipping these deities was sacrificed in his name, or for the greater glory of his pantheon. For a time Huitzilopochtli knew peace in his heart, and felt the joy that only violent death could bring to him.





In time, the Aztecs conquered the Mayans, the Toltecs and others, spreading themselves across the lands in a relentless torrent of war. Great Huitzilopochtli and the other, lesser gods he permitted to reign with him grew in power, reveling in the blood of their enemies. Those same gods grew complacent, no longer appearing before their people, speaking to them only through their servants, the priests. The gods called for sacrifices and conquest, demanded that they be served, but they no longer aided their people. Even gods make mistakes.

Far to the south, the Aztecs attempted to attack the mage now called El Dorado, at his home near Lake Parima, and were driven back for their insolence. El Dorado's female allies had the power to change shapes, becoming monstrous attackers that killed with unparalleled ferocity. Far to the north, the Aztecs were met by proud peoples with powerful allies that could also change shape, and were again driven back. Despite their defeats, the Aztecs grew in power and glory. These small defeats were as nothing compared to the great conquests elsewhere. Like their gods, the Aztecs grew complacent, certain that nothing could ever stop them. Until the coming of Cortes.

Surrender

Cortes came from Spain by way of Cuba, and brought with him the fulfillment of a dark prophecy. He came first to the lands now called Veracruz, bringing with him Helena, a powerful vampire, some 600 men and a terrifying tool of the Technocracy, a cannon. Rumors of the powerful king, Motecuzoma, and more importantly, legends of his wealth, drove the Spaniard and his minions forward, eventually leading them to Tenochtitlan. 200 of Cortes' men were left in Veracruz to hold the land in Spain's name. Along the way, the Spaniards encountered a rival group of natives who had managed to fight off all attempts by the Aztecs to conquer them, the Tlaxcalan.

Cortes and the Tlaxcalan came to an understanding shortly after Cortes' cannon had taught the tribe the error of their ways; between the cannon and the horses that he brought with him to the continent, Cortes easily won against his first true foes. With the help of Helena, he soon convinced the Tlaxcalan to join them. The Tlaxcalan realized that even Tenochtitlan could easily fall to the power of Cortes' cannon. Embittered by their long-standing war against the Aztecs, the Tlaxcalan offered their assistance to reach and conquer the powerful empire, assistance that Cortes eagerly accepted.

In truth, there really was no war. Motecuzoma — king of the Aztec empire — knew what even Cortes did not know. The Spaniard had brought with him a powerful being, an Oracle who had long ago left the continent and traveled to other parts of the world. Cortes brought with him Quetzalcoatl, powerful enough to be considered a god by the Aztecs, the very god that Huitzilopochtli had replaced. Motecuzoma sent tithings to placate the returning deity, tithings that Cortes kept for himself and for his motherland, Spain.

Motecuzoma knew that his time as a leader was soon to end; the followers of Quetzalcoatl had foreseen that his leadership would bring about the fall the Aztec nation. Now they awaited their god in Cholula, a free city that stood in allegiance with Motecuzoma. The Cholulan people rejoiced to have their god back, until their god betrayed them. The Spaniards and their Tlaxcalan warriors devastated the Cholulans, slaughtering the willing followers of a god who no longer cared.

Most believed that Quetzalcoatl had changed during his long visit to Europe, turning to follow the ways of the Spaniards. In truth, he never actually came back from the distant lands. Only his physical form returned, possessed by a Seeker of Voids. The mage has long since gone insane, and still believes that he is Quetzalcoatl. He is not. He may have some of the Oracle's memories, but the true Quetzalcoatl has long been with the Totem Phoenix in the Umbra. This too, I know for fact.

Motecuzoma saw the fall of Cholula as a final warning that he had angered Quetzalcoatl, and an angry god was far more terrifying than gods who no longer answered his pleas. In November, A.D. 1519, Motecuzoma faced his first god and his minions, stood before Cortes with his entourage of 400 men, and surrendered his empire. Queztalcoatl and Cortes alike were appalled by the bloody sacrifices that the Aztecs committed to satiate their gods. Within six months the whole of the empire fell before the combined might of the conquerors, and the sacrifices had stopped. Motecuzoma still led his people, but only because Cortes was able to use him as a pawn. By the end of the first month, the beautiful Helena left the area, claiming that what she sought could not be found there.

What she found was Huitzilopochtli, and that discovery alone was enough to drive her away. Huitzilopochtli lay beneath the great pyramid built to honor him, and Helena boldly entered the pyramid, only to flee upon seeing his slumbering form. So beautiful a woman, so easily terrified by the old legends from before she was even born! Helena could feel the might of Huitzilopochtli; even as he slept, his strength was enough to force her away. She ran far to the north, never to return. This was for the best — great Huitzilopoctli would surely have consumed her soul. Helena, no doubt, would probably tell a different tale, but she is not here to dispute the matter.

She left behind one of her own Childer, Marie Galbraith, and Huitzilopochtli used his powers to woo the Childe, convincing her that her Sire had betrayed her. She briefly reigned as the only Prince of Tenochtitlan.

The Fall

By the time Cortes came to Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire was home to over 200,000 people, over twice the size of any city in Europe at that time. Tenochtitlan rested in the very center of Lake Tetzcoco, built on enormous rafts and on the remains of buildings that had sunk

over the span of two centuries. Over 40 pyramids stood in the heart if the city, raised to the glory of the Aztec gods and, often as not, used for human sacrifice.

Over 135,000 sacrifices were made to Huitzilopochtli and other gods of the Aztec people. The people killed were mostly slaves, without rank or power, yet for their gift of life and blood their skulls were placed with reverence in racks before the greatest of the pyramids. The power of those sacrifices had served its purpose well. The energies released by those ritualistic slayings left the land forever tainted by the anger and sorrow of countless thousands of deaths.

Neither Quetzalcoatl nor Cortes had counted on the power of the new gods even when they were not visibly present. After only a few months, the Spaniards under the command of Cortes planned just how they would spend the gold that the Aztecs seemingly took for granted. The spirit of the Aztec nation was crushed. When Cortes was called away to deal with potential troubles in Veracruz, the gods took matters into their own hands and used the greed of the Spaniards as a weapon against them.

Over 400 additional Spaniards had joined Cortes in Tenochtitlan by that time, and Pedro de Alvarado — the temporary commander in Cortes' absence — began an assault against the mostly docile Aztecs, slaughtering some 10,000 of the people. From his resting place, great Huitzilopochtli smiled, and fed on their souls. He then forced the people he had abandoned to grow angry, to fight back where before they had simply tolerated the abuses they suffered at the Spaniards' hands.

Cortes came back to Tenochtitlan to find the people he had bloodlessly conquered in an uproar, tearing to pieces all that the Spaniards had brought with them. The fool was astounded; he could not believe that the citizens of Tenochtitlan could be so violent after they so easily surrendered to him. Cortes attempted to placate the Aztecs by using Motecuzoma as a pawn again. Poor, foolish Motecuzoma tried to pacify his people, but the Spaniards knew enough of his language to understand him when he swore that the Spanish people would leave Tenochtitlan. They repeatedly stabbed him in the back, even as he spoke to his followers. And Huitzilopochtli smiled again, and fed on the emotional turmoil of his people.

Enraged by the actions of the Spaniards and led by Motecuzoma's cousin Cu'automec, the Aztec peoples drove Hernan Cortes and his followers from the city, slaying over 800 Spaniards in retaliation. For ten short months, Tenochtitlan remained the capital of the Aztec empire. Then Cortes returned, bringing with him all of the weapons he could find. Those natives who had been conquered by the Aztecs offered no assistance against the Spanish conquerors. The Spaniards brought with them more mighty weapons, the Inquisition and, unbeknownst to them, the Sabbat. The Sabbat encountered Marie Galbraith, fully prepared to destroy her, but changed their minds when they discovered how eager she was to break the Blood Bond that



R.M.

held her in Thrall to Helena. In time she proved herself to the members of the Sabbat, and in time she achieved the position of Cardinal for all of Mexico, just as Huitzilopochtli wanted.

At the sign of the cross, held by the true believers of the Inquisition, Huitzilopochtli grew silent, hiding in the darkness and biding his time. In a span of less than 75 days, the Aztec empire was crushed. Tenochtitlan and several other cities in the area were razed, burned, and plundered. Over the ruins of Tenochtitlan a new city was built, a city named after the valley in which it rested. Mexico City. Huitzilopochtli's first Kindred pawn was in place, and the time was right for sleeping.

Starvation and the plague further devastated the remains of the Aztec empire, and further fed Huitzilopochtli. Cortes claimed fealty from all who had been a part of the empire, and conquered the lands in the name of Spain. Huitzilopochtli watched on, silent and brooding. The Inquisition became a major force in Mexico, and with the Inquisition came members of the Celestial Chorus. While the Spaniards hunted down as many of the supernatural creatures as could be found, destroying them outright whenever possible, the mages began a campaign of enlightenment that continues strongly even to the present day. Huitzilopochtli, the primary god of the Aztec peoples, all but faded from the peoples' minds as Catholicism was introduced into the area. Yet even as unhappy Huitzilopochtli's worshippers were turned from him, he began to plan anew.

Spanish Rule

The Spanish occupation of Mexico failed to make life any easier for the natives. Those who once held land soon became merely servants under the new landholders, the Hacendados, and their rulers the Viceroy. The lands around Mexico City were cultivated and farmed. Throughout colonial Mexico, large land holdings called Haciendas became the norm. Haciendas were owned by the Spanish Hacendados, and were worked by the people who had originally owned the land. The native people were forced to learn Spanish, as the Spaniards found their native tongues too difficult to comprehend and pronounce. Huitzilopochtli watched on, angered by the mistreatment of his proud warriors, made helpless through the Inquisition's Faith. Even held at bay, he fed on the suffering of his once-proud legions.

All Spaniards who came to the Colonies in Mexico were forced to swear fealty to the Catholic Church and to Spain, and fell easily under the power of the Inquisition. Even in those times, the Society of Leopold was subtle, hiding among the clergy. Still, they commanded many of the Catholic soldiers, destroying any who did not publicly agree to convert to Catholicism. They also destroyed many who agreed to convert, simply because of their heritage: Garou Kinfolk were hunted down and slaughtered as witches, known mages were destroyed, and the few Kindred who came to the area soon met with Final Death if they were not careful.

Those supernaturals who survived grew cautious, and for many years the Awakened of all forms managed to live in the area without too much fear. However, those who lived in the area for too long soon fell victim to the baser instincts of their nature. Greed, all manner of lust, and violence rapidly became the norm. The Inquisition eventually moved on, leaving behind small pocket groups to report any crimes to Spain and the Holy Catholic Church.

Life went on as before among the low-status natives — serving their overlords and praying for escape to a better place. The primary difference was to whom they prayed for guidance.

While Huitzilopoctli had once been the root source of religious fervor, Catholicism swiftly grew in strength, evolving into a unique version that blended traditional beliefs with those of the Catholic conquerors. Huitzilopoctli became furious, maddened by the betrayal. Still, he schemed and planned his vengeance.

As Mexico and Mexico City grew in power and in size, the influence of the Catholic Church spread as well. For 300 years, very little seemed to change in the area, save for the slow growth of the Catholic Church's land holdings. The Spanish-controlled government attempted to take the lands away from the church and, in fact, succeeded in their attempts, but only at great cost. The city was embroiled in battle after battle for a great many years. Through it all, Huitzilopoctli slept, feeding on the pain and waiting for the time when he could awaken and finish what he had begun. He cared only for gathering the forces needed to awaken his dark masters...

The Spaniards attempted to destroy all written records of the Aztecs' history, burning all of the codices that the Aztec people had created and burying the great temples they had built in worship of their gods. Members of the Celestial Chorus hid and rewrote many codices to prevent obscurity, the fate that had befallen the mage El Dorado. The Realm of El Dorado had been assaulted by a heavy invading force, among them the Seekers of the Void. Despite El Dorado's best efforts and the might of the Black Fury Garou who fought at his side, the Seekers of the Void literally mapped his city out of existence. In the eyes of the Technocracy, El Dorado and the city named after him had no place in the New World they were building. Even far from the shores of Lake Parima, I could feel the anguish of El Dorado at his betrayal by Quetzalcoatl. They had been friends, you see, and they had been brothers in their desire to care for the land. I think that is what defeated the Oracle: betrayal by his brother.

The peoples of Mexico City, and all of Mexico, soon started segregating. The Penitulares — Spanish colonists born in Spain — soon took the most powerful positions in the government and in the church, followed in power by the Crioles — those of pure Spanish descent born in Mexico, the Mestizos, those of mixed heritage — and lastly the natives themselves. Despite the overwhelming numbers of Mestizos, the Penitulares and the Crioles held all real political and financial power.

The vast majority of the people in the land lived in poverty and without protection of any sort from criminals; while they were forced to pay taxes, the moneys went to Spain. On September 16, A.D. 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla called for revolt, and the people of Mexico agreed. The Criollo priest rallied forces of natives and Crioles to his side. Despite his best efforts, his attempt to overthrow the Spanish rule failed, and he was executed as an example to the peasantry. Huitzilopoctli fed well during the bloody fighting.

History repeated itself; the descendants of the Aztec Empire rose in even greater numbers to battle against the Spanish tyranny. Though it took several years to right the situation, the Mexican people won their liberty from Spain; in A.D. 1821 the Spanish government was forced to sign the Treaty of Cordoba. Mexico was no longer a colony of Spain, but a country in its own right.

The Last Century

For three years after the victory, various political factions within Mexico City attempted to wrest control of the government. These coups were usually very brief, lasting only until yet another uprising drove would-be dictators down. Among the most prominent of the contenders was Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, a fearsome strategist and a brutal revolutionary.

In 1910, Emilio Zapata called for land reform. After years of trying to arrange the land reform, Zapata, like Pancho Villa, robbed the Hacendados of their riches and livestock to feed and equip his followers. Even as the revolution ended, Zapata was slaughtered by his own men, men who had been purchased with promises of wealth and power. Zapata is so much a figure of legend in Mexico that recent attacks by guerrilla forces in southern Mexico have been carried out under his name — an impressive achievement for a mortal, but the use of his name has left him no less dead.

To compound the problems, settlers from the United States started moving into the northernmost parts of Mexico, leading to a series of border skirmishes and finally to the Mexican-American War. The war lasted for almost 10 years, and during this time the Sabbat Kindred used their typically brutal tactics to aid the United States. General Winfield Scott of the United States Army captured Mexico City in the latter part of 1847.

On February 2, A.D. 1848, the government of Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, surrendering over one third of their entire country to the United States, for the tidy sum of \$15,000,000. By the time the United States Army had left Mexico City, the Sabbat had cemented their earlier stronghold. Those Kindred who had remained in hiding had assisted in Mexico's downfall from within. Those who had fled before the Inquisition returned with reinforcements. Mexico City never had a chance.

And that was just as Huitzilopochtli wanted it. The Sabbat hated the Inquisition almost as much as the god of war himself hated the interlopers.

Contrary to what many suppose, many of Mexico's wars can only be blamed on the mortals. The Mexican war against France was driven by human greed, though the Sabbat used the opportunity to assault and conquer still more of the southern tip North America. Just as the eventual victory by Mexico was manipulated by the Sabbat, the power gap left by the death of Mexico's first president, Benito Juarez, was an opportunity for another group. The "election" of Juarez' successor was manipulated by Pentex. Then merely a budding group, the Pentex companies supported the less-than-benevolent rule of General Porfirio Diaz.

During his time as the President of Mexico, Diaz ruled as a dictator, refusing the people their right to elect another in his place and supporting heavy industrialization. Pentex grew in power and in size, eventually moving many of their operations to Mexico City. With Pentex came the Black Spiral Dancers. Huitzilopochtli was pleased, for here, as with the Sabbat before, was a group he could manipulate.

During the 1940's, Mexico City's industrialization increased by leaps and bounds as factories were built to assist in the battle against the Nazi movement. The Technocracy, under the influence of Quetzalcoatl, increased industrialization in the area as never before. The powerful Technomancer spent a great deal of time studying his arts and planning the next stages in the technological growth of his homeland. Quetzalcoatl had decided that the time was right to step up operations in Mexico, and that Mexico City was the ideal place for industrialization. When the war was over, dozens of the manufacturers went out of business, or were absorbed by subsidiaries of Pentex. The coils of the Wyrm wrapped around Mexico City and squeezed hard, drawing blood again and again. The Technocracy mages took full advantage of the huge supply of empty warehouses, draining the Nodes that had always existed beneath the shores of Lake Teztoco. All, that is, save the four powerful Nodes that Huitzilopochtli hid from their view.

Among the Sabbat, Pentex, the Black Spiral Dancers, and the combined forces of the Technocracy, there is little about Mexico City that seems appealing at a glance. Most non-native people asked about the city will normally respond with comments like "Don't drink the water," and "You wouldn't catch me there in a million years." The crime rate is appalling, the living conditions for the vast majority of Mexico City's citizens are reprehensible, and the smog factor makes Los Angeles seem pleasant in comparison. On the surface, there is little to keep a person in the city. Hope cannot be seen on the surface. This is as Huitzilopochtli wants it.



The Great Quake of 1985

September 19, A.D. 1985: An earthquake registering 8.1 on the Richter Scale struck Mexico City. Over 4,000 buildings sustained damage ranging from broken windows and shattered walls to complete structural collapse. More than 9,000 people were crushed to death under the weight of those buildings, and 100,000 or more people were injured. The seismic waves that slammed through Mexico City were more powerful by far than those that followed the atomic explosion in Hiroshima.

Throughout all of Mexico City, the Garou, Kindred and mages have sought the cause of the massive earthquake, accusing each other, their own kind, and even Pentex and various demonic forces. No one has ever found a supernatural cause for the quake, and tensions between the various ruling factions have been building ever since.

The people of Mexico City banded together as never before, often risking their own lives in an attempt to save the thousands pinned beneath the devastation. In the last eight years, all signs that there ever was an earthquake have been removed, rebuilt or simply hidden behind new layers of paint and plaster. Still, the Awakened wonder who was behind the attack.

In truth, the devastation was simply a natural earthquake caused by the shifting of enormous sections of the ocean's crust slipping and colliding with the foundation of the continent. Nature and the stresses of time are to blame and all other forces are innocent — at least of this particular crime.

The Awakened refuse to accept that nature alone is at fault. Still they point to each other and wonder who is trying to destroy them, just who is powerful enough to have caught them all off guard. The supernaturals live in a state of enhanced paranoia, and that is just as Huitzilopochtli wants it.

Mexico City Today:

Mexico City's growth and gigantic size are alarming all out of all known proportion.

— Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, circa 1984

Today Mexico City is one of the fastest growing cities in the world. With a population in excess of 20,000,000 people, half or more under the age of 18, Mexico City is already world's most populous city, and there is no end in sight. Over 1,000 people move to the city from other parts of Mexico daily, and the predictions are that by A.D. 2000 the city will hold in excess of 30,000,000 living souls.

Almost 30,000 factories spew over 11,000 tons of black smoke and gaseous waste into the air daily. Encased in mountains as she is, Mexico City holds most of this poisonous air close to her heart. The city attracts people just the same, people making a last desperate attempt to eke out a living away from farms that simply do not turn a profit.

The Awakened

The Technocracy's grip on the city is impossible to shake; every Node that could be found has been converted by Iteration X, every Chantry that once existed has been destroyed — or so the Technocracy believes. Mexico City is literally the Sabbat stronghold in North America. The L.A. Freestates act as a buffer against blatant Camarilla intervention, but there are none insane enough to enter the area if they do not belong to the Sabbat — or so the Sabbat believes.

The Black Spiral Dancers have a powerful Hive beneath the vibrant crust of Mexico City and they alone of all

Garou thrive in the darkest city in the New World — or so they believe. What Pentex doesn't own in Mexico City is simply not worth owning; the trash and human debris that litter the streets or worse, hide away in the massive garbage dumps, clawing caves into heaps of human refuse, are hardly of value in the world. Or so Pentex would like to believe. In Mexico City, as in few other locations, the Sabbat and the Technocracy unknowingly work together, increasing the size of the city and the population that inhabits her skin like maggots on a bloated corpse. Neither group realizes how well they have been manipulated by Huitzilopochtli.

Surely there are none amongst the Traditions, none amongst the Camarilla's Kindred or in the Tribes of the Garou who would be foolish enough to live in Mexico City. Surely they know that they could not survive without being detected and killed, or worse, corrupted. As long as the leaders of Mexico City's Awakened believe this way, there will always be hope.

The bitter irony of Mexico City is simply that the city is too large for any of these groups to control. Contrary to the Technocracy's belief, there are a surprising number of Tradition mages in the city. An even larger number of Nephandi exist, waiting and enjoying the view. With sufficient skill, a very cautious vampire — perhaps even an Archon — could avoid detection in a city of 20,000,000. And the streets of Mexico City hold one of the largest gatherings of Bone Gnawers anywhere, over 50 when last I counted; who better to survive in a city so large than the Garou wise enough to know how to adapt?

Pentex: The Talon of the Wyrm

*It's a small world and it smells funny
I'd buy another if it wasn't for the money*

— Sisters of Mercy, "Vision Thing"

Pentex employees make up a surprising portion of the wealthy in Mexico City; the upper echelon executives in Pentex' employ are paid excessively for both the knowledge they possess and the loyalty they show. Even by the standards of living in the United States, the employees of Pentex are well paid; in Mexico City they can, and often do, live like royalty.

The vast majority of Pentex factory employees are paid only 65 cents per hour, and are forced to work twelve-hour days. There are no benefit plans for the factory workers in Mexico City. Most of the workers are subliminally exposed daily to corruptive concepts and emotions in one of the Bane-corporation's greatest attempts to destroy the human spirit. Most of Pentex' manual laborers are chosen after a simple screening to find who is the most desperate for work, and who has the lowest moral standard. Most of the employees working for Pentex are already fairly corrupt, and are easily led to the ways of the Wyrm.

Those who fall victim to industrial accidents or hazardous waste and survive are thrown out on the street. "Doctors" in each of the factories examine the victims for injuries and keep notes. Those with fomori "potential" are immediately taken, at gun point if necessary, to the doctor's offices for "treatment." Most are never seen again — at least not in any recognizable form.

Fomori agents are often "recruited" in Mexico City and then given a brief training course before being sent as reinforcements in the war against the Garou for domination of the Amazon Basin (see *Rage Across the Amazon*). Those who prove too feeble for battle in the Amazon are often used as urban police troops, particularly if they can still pass for human.

Hope and Misery

Despite the best efforts of the Technocracy, the Catholic Church remains a powerful force in Mexico City. Latin American Catholicism is a very different form of the Roman religion, adding several patrons unique to Latin America, and several holy times that are found only in Mexico and in a few adjoining countries. The Church brings not only members of the Society of Leopold, but members of the Celestial Chorus as well. There is little that can be done about the poverty, but the Sleepers can be taught, and there are few places known to humankind where a stronger supply of Faith can be found. The people of Mexico City awaken every day to the same drab world, in many cases awaking to the same four walls, surrounded by family members. Birth control is a fairly new concept in Mexico City, and abortion is illegal — it still occurs in the back alleys and filth-lined rooms, but it is illegal just the same. Families frequently live as many as 10 to a small house, in places with no power and very poor plumbing. In spite of some of the worst overpopulation and poverty known to exist on this planet, hope still awakens in the majority of people every day.

Many of the people are simply trying to do their best, but there are those among them who don't hesitate to take what they desire, even at the expense of other lives. Hope alone cannot stop the rampant crime that exists in Mexico City. Here, the only law that really counts is the law of survival. The law enforcement agencies in Mexico City are more often than not horribly corrupt, with methods of gathering confessions that range from simple lying to outright torture. The crimes a person is accused of may not have even occurred — for the right sum, a crime can be fabricated to suit the punishment. Murderers can walk away from bloodied victims with no fear of ever being captured, as long as they can pay the right sum to the police.

Hundreds of years have taught the poor of Mexico City to accept their fates all too often, but the small percentage of truly wealthy citizens have helped with the lesson. Pay-offs and governmental kick-backs pay for an amazing amount of the rich man's lifestyle.

Along the border, disease and misery ravage the land, fueled by the greed of corporate tyrants. Pentex could not be happier. The Progenitors are studying the results carefully, but some of the more concerned among them have started work on trying to find a cure for the problems caused by such rampant pollution. It should be noted that the Progenitors in Mexico City have done nothing at all to stop the accelerated genetic degeneration of the people of Mexico. Only in the areas away from the city do the Progenitors attempt to find a solution.



The Underbelly of the Wyrm

The Nosferatu *antitribu* of Mexico City have gone mad, at least in the eyes of most Kindred. The Nosferatu of the Sabbat, along with the Black Spiral Dancers and the Nephandi mages, have created a monster that needs them less than they need it.

Simply called the Pandemonium, or the Underbelly by its denizens, the entire area under Mexico City, above, around and beneath what was once Tenochtitlan and Tlatelcoco — the religious capital of the Aztec Empire — has become one enormous community in its own right.

Soon after Cortes came to Tenochtitlan, Huitzilopochtli expanded his consciousness, calling to his masters and asking for their aid. The aid came in the form of a small black growth that erupted from Huitzilopochtli's chest and began to feed on the same pain and frustration that nourished the god of war. He had no complaints about sharing the energies; there was still so much suffering to go around.

In the ruins of what was once the capital of the Aztec Nation, a Nephandi Labyrinth, a Black Spiral Dancer Hive, a Nosferatu Warren, and a vile haunt have

merged, growing from the black seed that Huitzilopochtli planted. Contrary to the Technocracy's belief, the Underbelly is filled with several powerful Nodes hidden by the powers of the Nosferatu and Nephandi. The Underbelly reaches to portals deep into the Umbra where creatures beyond simple description wait with hungry souls. All of the Underbelly is filled with the Wyrm's corruption, and plans are well under way to extend the inadequate sewer systems even deeper into the corrupted soil.

Ironically, the powerful beliefs of the citizens of Mexico City and the works of the Celestial Chorus are partially responsible for the ease with which the under dwellers have hidden their home. The corruption is weakened nearer to the city's surface, beaten back to some small degree by the wishes of the people and the power of the Celestial Chorus. Even the Chorus is unaware of the effect they have on the Underbelly.

And that is just as Huitzilopochtli wants it.

The North American Free Trade Agreement

The American government couldn't care less if I or anyone else here gets sick or dies, if it gets in the way of free trade.

— Jim Teyechea, 44-year-old victim of cancer allegedly brought on by the Maquiladora Program (*Spin Magazine*, October 1993)

The North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, was only recently passed, and already the impact can be felt in Mexico City. In the words of one Tradition mage, "The Technocracy has only just begun to destroy the world as we know it." In the Gothic-Punk world, NAFTA only works on paper.

In 1964, the country of Mexico conceded to a smaller form of this agreement that opened free trade along the Mexican border. Many Fortune 500 companies in the States eagerly opened new factories in the area.

In addition to saving the participating companies countless millions in labor costs every year — \$30,000 dollars per employee, as opposed to what the same employee would make in the U.S. — the Maquiladora Program caused a population explosion in the border areas of Mexico that comes close to rivaling the population increase in Mexico City proper. In the last 10 years, the areas of Mexico exposed to the Maquiladora Program have literally doubled in population as the impoverished people of Mexico attempt to find employment.

In the last 30 years, both cancer and birth defects have skyrocketed in the area. These statistics come from the United States alone, with doubtless much higher numbers on the Mexican side of the border. Open sewage spills into the Rio Grande, and toxic waste flows into the land, air and water at rates exceeding 260,000 tons per year. Most of this waste comes from large U.S. companies that are not restricted by the same environmental laws in Mexico as they are in the U.S. This is not fiction. This pollution exists.

The sewer systems in most of the areas affected were never designed to accommodate the vast numbers of people that now live in the area. The people moving into the areas are normally desperate for work, and seldom make enough money to afford reasonable housing. As with Mexico City, many are forced to live in hovels, or worse, find shelter within the garbage heaps and landfills.

All of Mexico is now opened to the same opportunities for jobs from the USA and possibly even from Canada. All of Mexico could soon face the same overwhelming disposal problems as the border towns and Mexico City, along with all of the same consequences.

Protest and Uprisings

The war we declare is a final but justified measure. We have nothing, absolutely nothing. Not a dignified roof, nor work, nor land, nor health care, nor education.

— Commandante Marcos, leader of the rebel forces in Mexico's Chiapas attacks, in a communiqué issued from the occupied towns

While many of the Mexican peoples support NAFTA, hoping to find more jobs and a better lifestyle, there are also many who are opposed. In some cases, the opposition to NAFTA takes the form of violence. On January 1, 1994, over 2,000 armed Mexicans, mostly native Indians, attacked the towns of San Cristobal de las Casas, Ocosingo, Altamirano, and Las Margaritas in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico. The worst of the violence took place in San Cristobal de las Casas, where members of the Zapatista National Liberation Army — named after Emiliano Zapata — stormed into the city and attacked the town hall. The building was ransacked and set ablaze.

The purpose of this destruction was simple: the Mayan people living in the area had decided that the time had come to point out their troubles. While most of Mexico and Mexico City celebrated the coming of NAFTA, the Mayans of Chiapas simply wanted to take back what had been theirs before the Europeans came.

That the attack was doomed to failure is a given; that it came at the worst possible time, for President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was also a given. Salinas claimed that NAFTA was necessary, and would bring Mexico into power as an industrialized nation. Salinas was internationally embarrassed — first by the attempted coup, then by public outrage as many of the attacking guerrillas were gunned down not in combat, but in military executions. In a country where left-wing violence has not occurred in two decades, the assault was unexpected and, in the eyes of the government, unprovoked.

The battle lasted for six days, before the Mexican government forced the freedom fighters back into the hills. Over 100 died in the conflict, mostly members of the Zapatista. In at least six cases, the Mayan fighters had their hands bound and were shot in the back of the head. The guerrilla fighters, estimated at some 2,000, were met by an estimated 12,000 Mexican soldiers using planes, helicopters and armored personnel carriers.

"This incident is obviously unfortunate, but I don't think it will have any impact at all on the interest of U.S. business in pursuing a strong relationship with Mexico in NAFTA," said Everett Briggs, president of the Council of the Americas, which represents about 200 U.S. companies with investments in Latin America. "Mexico is a big country. You can have an outbreak of trouble in one place without a big effect elsewhere."

— Time, January 17, 1994

The week after the violence had erupted, the Mexican government promised to send 20 tons of much needed food supplies into the area, and to send Chiapas a \$1,000,000 advance on President Salinas' Solidarity program, a program designed to keep Mexico's economy from completely collapsing. Time will tell if these promises are fulfilled.

The majority of the Zapatista fighters escaped into the mountains. Should the promises delivered by the Mexican Government not come through, it is almost certain that there will be more attacks. The start of NAFTA's involvement in Mexico has been less than prosperous.

The Light History of Paraiso Vista



Paraiso Vista is a beautiful town, tranquil and without much by way of crime. No place is perfect; there are still a few small squabbles, and from time to time a drunken brawl, but no serious crime. There has never been a murder in Paraiso Vista; there has never been a reason for killing. No one is without the necessities of life, and most have more than they need. Paraiso Vista is content. The people want for nothing and keep to themselves. Paraiso Vista is a very well-kept secret less than 100 miles from the violence and poverty of Mexico City.

All told, the population of Paraiso Vista, including the farms nearby, numbers only 432 people. There are no televisions in Paraiso Vista. There is only one phone, and that seldom works very well. The wells from which the people drink are pure and untouched by the industrial filth that drenches most of the country. The Wyrm has never found a stronghold from which it could latch onto the hearts and minds of the people.

There are no mages, Garou or Kindred in Paraiso Vista. There are a few ghosts here, but only a few, and they are placated by the celebrations and gifts presented during the Days of the Dead.

The largest threat that has ever come to Paraiso Vista was a few tremors from the great earthquake of 1985. Even that was only a gentle rattling of windows; no one was hurt, for which the people are all grateful. The only thing damaged was the small Catholic Church that collapsed in upon itself. It was a pretty building, but hardly necessary; no one had attended in years. "God," the people of Paraiso Vista have always said, "is in the heart, not in a building." Parents teach their children about God and Jesus Christ at home, and religion is almost never discussed aloud, save perhaps during the holidays.

Paraiso Vista is a very small community, and has been around for almost 300 years. Somehow, the town never really grew. From time to time the children would leave on their own, never to return, but there were always new people coming in — never too many, just enough for a town the size of Paraiso Vista — and the town survived. Most of the families live in the same homes their great-grandparents lived in, and the past is held close to the heart. The simple ways of life really are better, as far as Paraiso Vista and her people are concerned.



To the north of the village, a cold, pure stream runs from the mountains, filling the small lake and the wells. When the dry season comes, the tiny lake — hardly more than a pond, if the truth must be told — dries up. But the wells remain full of sweet, fresh water. The crops grow well, and the farm animals never need much tending. The lands to the east and west of town are covered with crops and pastures, and to the south the mountain slopes gently away until it stops and plummets 5,000 feet. No one is silly enough to go too close to the edge — it could be dangerous.

The People

Most of the people in Paraiso Vista are literate, but just about the only book that is ever read is the Bible, and the stories written by some of Paraiso Vista's more eccentric citizens, the ones who fancy themselves writers or poets. Julio Lopez — the mayor and constable both, which means he has too much free time on his hands, as nothing really needs fixing — has even managed to sell a few of his poems to magazines and has a heroic fantasy tale that is being considered by a New York publisher.

The people of Paraiso Vista are not ignorant. That mistake is too easy to make. They are simply content to live in peace, working in their fields and toying with their hobbies. Crazy old Pedro Cortez even putters around with his truck, the only source of transportation in the town, and the only way in which medical supplies and the like are brought into Paraiso Vista, for that matter. Old Pedro is a strange one; he even has a camera, as if there could be any need of such a thing in the little town. Pedro has over 400 rolls of film in his house, and not one of them has ever been developed. But as soon as Julio's book is sold, Pedro has promised a photo of him for the back cover.

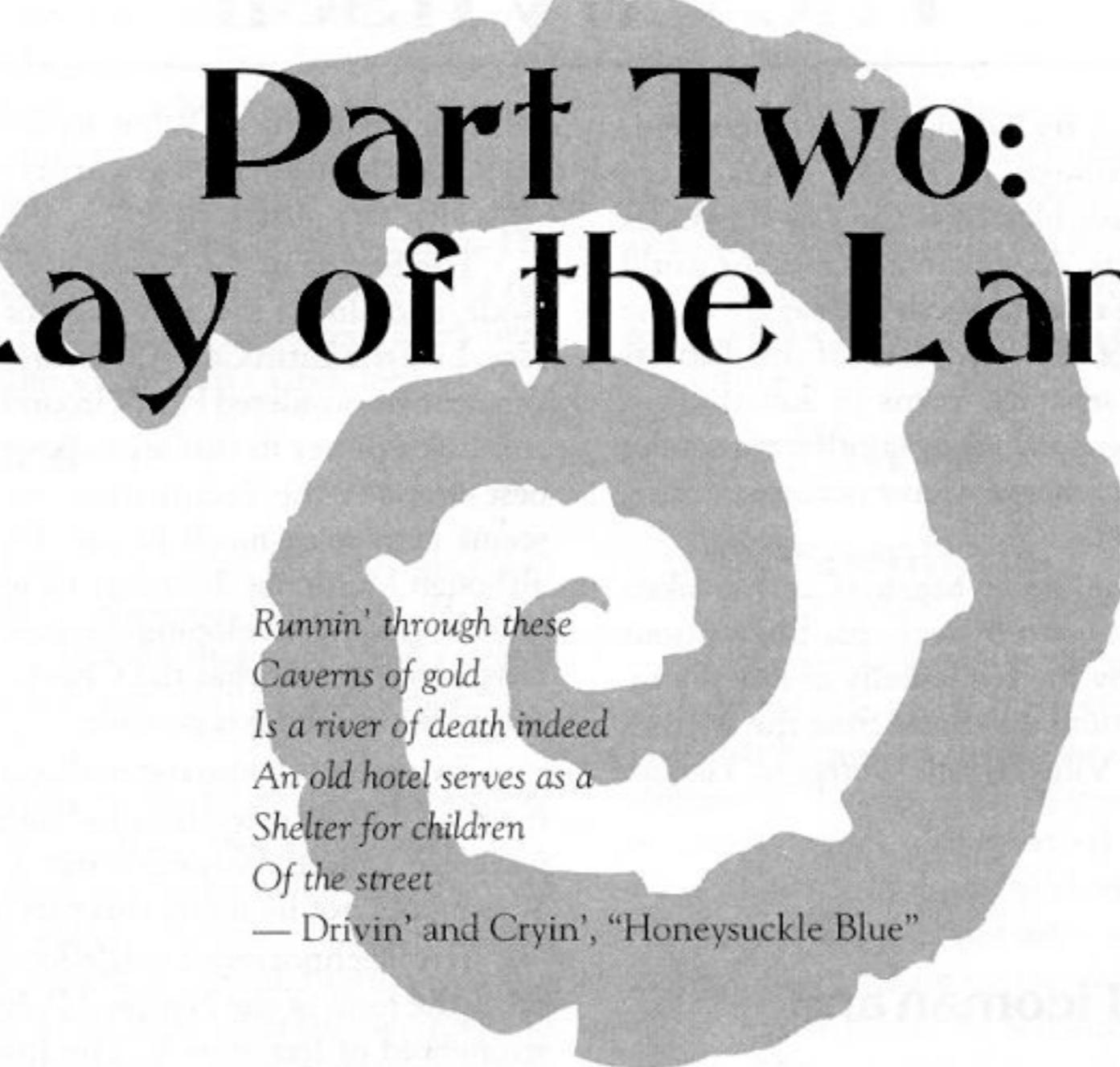
Paraiso Vista literally means "Paradise's View." As far as the people of Paraiso Vista are concerned, there is no need to know anything more. They are in view of the heavens, and all is well with their world. Paraiso Vista is innocent, with less crime than perhaps any town its size has ever known.

And that is just as Huitzilopochtli has always kept it.

I know of these things; I know all there is to know about Mexico City and about Paraiso Vista. They have been shaped by my will and by my will alone they both survive. I was there when Huitzilopochtli walked from the stormy waters and onto the land. I watched as he conquered and ruled the Aztec Nation. I know so much that is hidden from the rest of the World of Darkness. For I am Huitzilopochtli, and I am awake at last. My time has come again.



Part Two: Lay of the Land



*Runnin' through these
Caverns of gold
Is a river of death indeed
An old hotel serves as a
Shelter for children
Of the street*
— Drivin' and Cryin', "Honeysuckle Blue"

Mexico City is one of the oldest inhabited sites in all of North America. The Valle de Anahuac — the Valley of Mexico — is a plain extending just under 600 square miles, surrounded by mountains in all directions. The valley rises over 7,000 feet above sea level, with the mountains that surround it rising anywhere between 10,000 feet to levels as high as 17,000 feet. For roughly 20,000 years this valley has been inhabited by native tribes, originally in smaller groups, and later in actual towns.

Weather

Mexico City proper is home to over 20,000,000 humans, with an average of 250 people per square mile. The population and the geological location in a valley have led to hideous pollution problems. The average temperature in Mexico City varies little throughout the year. During the winter months, the average temperature is 68 degrees Fahrenheit; the winter months are desperate times for some, as the heavy air often builds into a thick fog laden with carbon monoxide and other pollutants. The very old and the very young suffer more than most from the poisonous gases. In the summer the temperature rises to an average 78 degrees Fahrenheit. The humidity in Mexico City varies

substantially; the dry season runs from November to April, with only four to ten inches of rain per month. The rainy season covers the rest of the year, and delivers between 17 and 30 inches of rain per month. Some of the older sections of the city are briefly flooded on a daily basis during the rainy season.

Traveling into Mexico City

Over 400 flights come into Mexico City every week from the U.S. alone. At least a dozen more inbound flights come from Europe during the same span of time. The Benito Juarez International Airport handles them all with little difficulty. Virtually every train that runs through Mexico stops in Mexico City. The conditions are more awkward and time consuming this way, but less likely to catch the attention of the Sabbat's sentinels. The main roads into Mexico City are well kept and, like the railroads, spread in every direction from the nation's capital.

Garou have been known to work in hunting parties around the roads leading into Mexico City; any Kindred found entering the city by car or bus is likely to die before reaching her destination.

The City Itself



Mexico City is divided into several subsections, though in recent years these divisions have blurred as the city continues to grow in size. As with many cities the world around, the most congested areas are in the very heart of the city. Many of the districts were once separate towns or suburbs, but have now become simply another part of the whole. Many mergers have occurred during the last 50 years.

Most of the worst corruption in Mexico City has taken place in the southern and eastern sections, the sections most heavily influenced by the Underbelly of the Wyrm. However, the western sections also suffer from the Wyrm's influence, particularly in Villa Alvaro Obregon, Tlalpan and Coyoacan.

The North

Santa Maria Ticoman and Ixtacala

(San-TA Ma-RE-a TEE-co-man; EKS-Ta-Ka-La)

Both of these small towns have been swallowed by Mexico City. These areas are far less corrupted than most parts of the city, due in part to the influence of the Celestial Chorus. Santa Maria Ticoman is best known for the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The Tonantzin — “Our Little Mother” — was once tolerated by Huitzilopochtli, as goddess to the Aztecs. But after the Conquistadors came and conquered the area, her influence grew almost intolerable.

The original temple to Tonantzin was destroyed by the Spaniards, reviled as a pagan symbol and scorned by the Christians. One of the first converts to Catholicism, a man named Juan Diego, was the first to see the image now called the Virgin of Guadalupe. According to legend, she demanded that a church be built, directly above the ruins of Tonantzin’s temple. As proof of her intent, the Virgin caused a spontaneous growth of roses on the barren hillside. The Virgin appeared five more times, and finally the church was built.

The Virgin of Guadalupe became the patron saint of the city, causing sudden healing in the sick, and inspiring the faith of a people without any true leadership. To the surviving Aztecs, she was (and still is) the goddess of old. To the Catholics, she became a sign that they had worked God’s will. To the Celestial Chorus she became a focal point in the salvation of the people. And to Maria de Guadalupe, leader of Iteration X in Mexico City, she became a perfect disguise for manipulating the masses and

gleaning information. What actually occurred on December 9, 1531 — the date when Juan Diego first saw the vision — is anyone’s guess.

The Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a powerful Node, and almost the only one not held by the Technocracy. Like the Latin Cross Cathedral and the Jesuit College, this spot is considered Holy Ground. The Celestial Chorus still holds power in this area above all others, despite the best efforts of the Technomancers. The Faith of the area seems to repulse much of the Technomancers’ magick, although Maria has discovered a way around this. As the city has grown, enveloping the area, some Technomancers have come to fear that the Chorus will gain in power. At this point anything is possible.

Two pyramids also rest in this area; both are minor and have no direct correlation to Huitzilopochtli. And that is just as the Celestial Chorus wants it. The Underbelly of the Wyrm does not lie under this part of the city.

The Technocracy’s battle for dominance in this area takes the form of the National Polytechnics Institute, the stronghold of Iteration X. The Institute is the least corrupted of all the Technocracy’s Nodes in Mexico City. Iteration X tends to stay more in this area than in the main part of the city.

Northeast

Gustavo A. Madero

(GOO-Sta-Vo Eh Ma-DEH-Rro)

Despite its close proximity to Santa Maria Ticoman, this area is heavily under the influence of the Wyrm. At least two passageways into the Underbelly can be found here. The only area of note within the district is the Lake of San Juan de Aragon. This lake produces waters that are surprisingly clear and sweet, and are rumored to remove the Wyrm’s influence from a person, provided that the proper rituals are performed.

Benito Juarez International Airport

(Ben-EE-To HU-Ar-ez)

The airport in Mexico City is large enough to accommodate over 600 flights per week. The airport is watched by literally every faction of the supernatural society in the city, and is guarded by Iteration X. The police on guard here are all very well trained and prepared to deal with almost any crisis. Anyone using the airport as a means of entering the city would do well to be on guard, especially since the police can and will stop anyone caught carrying firearms.

Iteration X does not realize that the Sabbat has guards here as well. The only safe Kindred in the airport are the ones who know the right gestures. Pentex employees are never stopped for any reason, and the amount of money that Pentex pays to assure this privilege is staggering. Garou would do well to stay away from the airport; virtually all the police are trained to shoot first and ask questions later. The Delirium still works on some of the guards, but many of the armed personnel have been treated to protect them from the worst effects of seeing a Garou in Crinos form.

Lake Tezcoco

(Tez-KO-KO)

The waters of Tezcoco run deeper than anyone could hope to understand. Here is where the first great city of the Aztecs stood, where the temples and marketplaces once held domain. Here is the very seat of Pandemonium's power.

Pandemonium rests beneath the ground, growing in power and adding to the pollution that the lake endures. The waters are often used by the homeless as a bathing place, and as a source of water. Thanks to Pandemonium's influence, the entire lake and the surrounding areas swarm with Oasis Banes. These secret Banes offer false security and then corrupt all but the strongest. The Garou stay far away from this area, as Nexus Crawlers have come from the water's depths upon occasion.

A miniature version of Tenochtitlan floats in the lake, reflecting the glory of the ancient city. The scale model has strange effects on observers; for a few, it causes powerful visions of the past. For most, it evokes a deep feeling of loss, while the very image of the ancient city plants the seeds of the Wyrm's corruption in others. Several attempts have been made to destroy the model, only to have the shattered ruins replaced as if nothing ever occurred. Most of the more sensitive Awakened in Mexico City stay far away from the powerful icon.

Northwest

Tlanepantla

(Tla-Ne-PANT-La)

Tlanepantla is one of the wealthier areas of Mexico City, and a place of prime interest to Toreador antitribu, primarily because of the Capitalinos. Los Capitalinos literally means "the people who live in the capital." Tlanepantla is actually a part of the federal state of Mexico that has simply been consumed by Mexico City. The area is still fairly clean and does not suffer as heavily from overpopulation. The artists among the Sabbat prefer the area as one of the better places to sell their works, both legal and illegal. Most of the humans in the area are exceedingly wealthy in comparison to the rest of the city. Like many of the smaller districts, Tlanepantla is officially under a part of the federal state of Mexico, not actually recognized as a section of Mexico City.



The Southeast

Ixtacalco

(EEKS-Ta-Kal-Co)

Ixtacalco is a desolate place, filled with the people who can find no homes or employment. The Wyrm is strong here, as is the industrialization caused by Pentex. The area is virtually one enormous Blight in the Umbra, and those that stay here normally fall to the Wyrm's influence faster than in other regions. The Sabbat have long chosen this area as prime feeding ground, and often pick their newest recruits from its human population.

In many places, large heaps of refuse have become shelter for people with no hope and too much pride or desperation to return to their distant villages. Visiting Euthanatos are known to frequent the area, as are the Samedi; what better place to kill than in a place where most of the humans have surrendered themselves to non-existence? Crime in Ixtacalco is rampant, and a few small clusters have even begun murdering their weaker neighbors with no real motive, unconsciously working the will of Huitzilopochtli.

Iztapalapa

(EEZ-Ta-Pal-A-Pa)

Iztapalapa suffers from the pollution and corruption of Mexico City as few of the other districts do. The entire area is grossly overpopulated and generally ignored by the humans in charge. The Reclusorio Oriente Penitentiary is the only true

claim to fame in this area, and holds several times the number of prisoners it was designed to contain.

While many of the prisoners are guilty of heinous crimes, there are also a good number of political prisoners and people arrested on a whim. For the right price, anyone will be incarcerated and locked away in the prison, regardless of any wrongdoing. The Bone Gnawers often speak of Garou who have been captured and vivisected in the Reclusorio. One story, a tale told of a Get of Fenris pup, is known truth. The Bone Gnawers have learned from the mistakes of others and do their best to avoid being seen by the wrong people. Sadly, the persecutors of Gaia's Chosen are everywhere in the city. Given a choice, most Garou would prefer the Underbelly to the tortures reputed to exist in Iztapalapa.

The West

Zona Rosa

(ZO-Na RRO-Za)

Zona Rosa is the very height of extravagance in Mexico City, a district of elegant restaurants, numerous art galleries and fine restaurants. Since the time of the Mexican Revolution, the street has catered to wealthy visitors from all nations. Many of the shops are owned and operated by people from other countries. France, Great Britain, Switzerland and Italy are all well represented in the shops, as is the United States.

The Zona Rosa District is safe from trouble during most times, but during the Days of the Dead, anything goes. Most of the shops are only open until 6:00 PM or so, though there are a few exceptions.

Tlatelolco

(Tla-Tel-Ol-KO)

Tlatelolco was the religious capital of the Aztec Empire. The majority of sacrifices to the Aztec gods took place here, as did the later sacrifices of so many innocents.

The Franciscans built their first church in Tlatelolco, but only after the Inquisition had ravaged the area, destroying as much of the fabulous art and the profane sacrificial areas as they could. Wraiths, attracted to the pain and suffering in the area, began migrating from other sections of the city. All the while, Huitzilopochtli slept beneath them all.

The area was perhaps the very first slum in Mexico City. The place where once the proud Aztecs made their sacrifices later became a place for those with nothing to try their luck at survival under the new colonial leaders. The bloodiest massacre between the Spanish and the Aztecs took place here, feeding the ground with entrails and feeding Huitzilopochtli with the souls he needed to grow in power.

In the 1950s, many of the people forced to move from where the University City now stands were relocated here, forced into public housing complexes. The numbers have grown over the years, and now over 80,000 humans make the district their home, whether they like it or not.

Just before the Olympics came to Mexico City in 1968, Tlatelolco was the sight of another massacre. When the impoverished people of Mexico discovered how lavishly the city was spending money in preparation for the Olympic Games, a large group of university students attempted to protest the excessive spending by demonstrating in the area. The hopes that international media coverage would make the world take notice were crushed.

Amid rumors that the students had planted bombs in the new stadium to destroy the Olympic Games, governmental forces removed any possible threat by gunning down over 300 men women and children. On October 16, 1968, the streets of Tlatelolco ran red with blood again, and Huitzilopochtli was pleased.

More than any other part of the city, Tlatelolco demands blood sacrifices even today.

MEXICO CITY

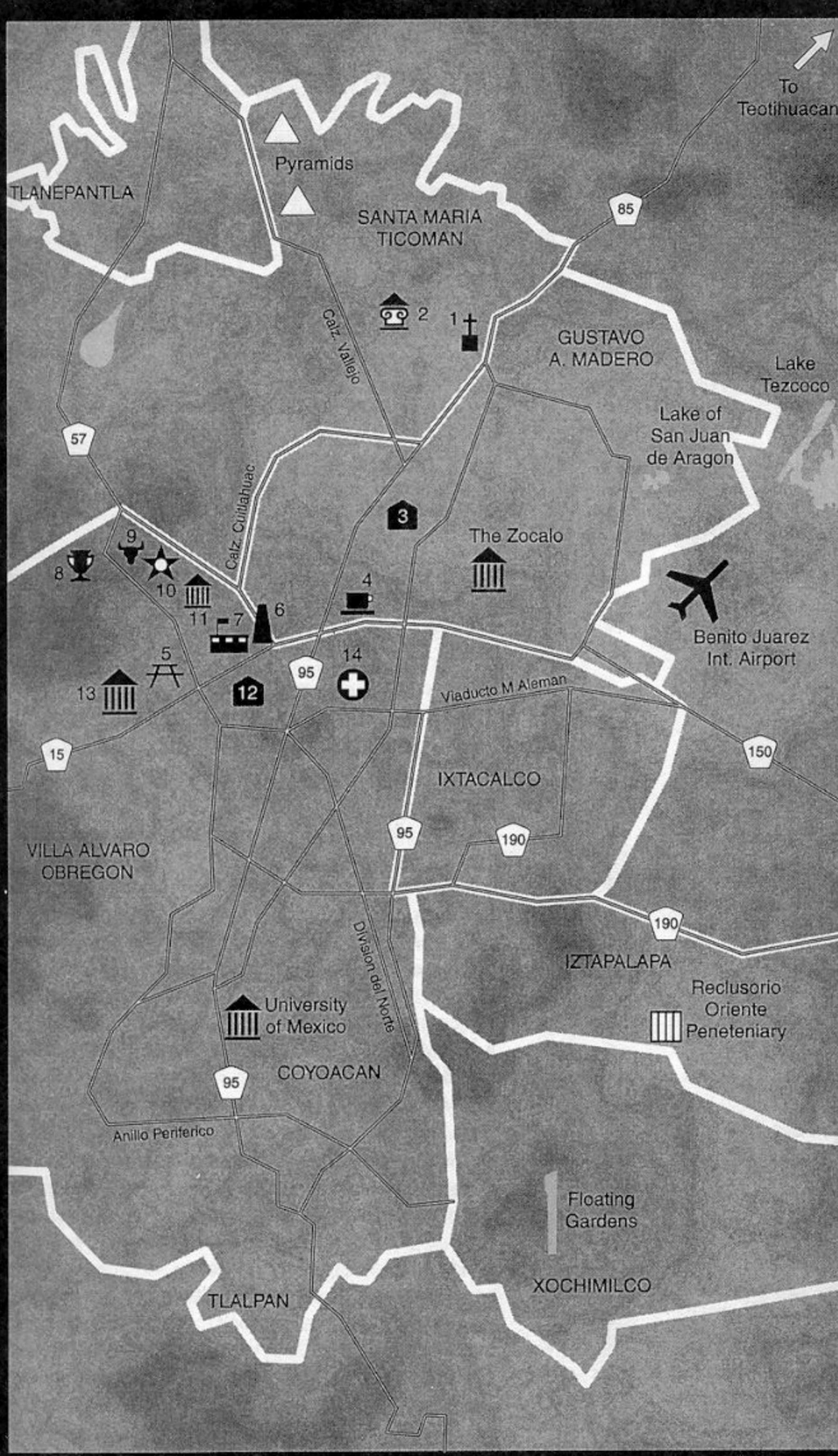
LOCATION KEY

1. The Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe
2. National Polytechnics Institute
3. Tlatelolco
4. Zona Rosa
5. Chapultepec Park
6. Monumento a los Ninos Heroes
7. The Castillo
8. Olympic Sports Center
9. El Toreo Bull Ring
10. Department of Defense
11. National School of Music
12. Presidential Residence
13. Museum of Natural History
14. National Medical Center



1 Mile
1 km

Map by Brian J. Brum



The Inquisition in Mexico

Another significant landmark in the area is the Latin Cross Cathedral, one of the largest Catholic buildings on the Continent and home to the Inquisition's small forces in Mexico City. An island of permanent True Faith guards the Cathedral from the city's Kindred. A dozen strong witch-hunters work from this landmark; one of them, Motolina, belongs to the Celestial Chorus, although the Inquisitors do not know of Motolina's past or true affiliations.

Buried in the Sagrario, a smaller building to the right of the cathedral, are the secrets held by the Inquisition. Volumes of information about the Kindred and Awakened of North America lay concealed in the hardened dirt beneath the foundation of the building. Once they were easily reached, but the years have seen them forced deeper into the ground, as the Sagrario slowly sinks into the dried lake bed where Tezcoco once held the land at bay.

The 11 mortal Inquisitors have True Faith ratings of 5 or better; this has allowed them to survive as long as they have. From time to time, they recruit helpers from the faithful, but the belief of such "part-time" hunters is often found wanting. While the Sabbat have tried to infiltrate the local Inquisition with ghouls, they have remained unsuccessful.

The Technocracy and the hunters are unaware of each other; few Inquisitors would recognize Technomancers as "witches" anyway. They concentrate their energies on the vampires instead. Melinda Galbraith, the Cardinal of Mexico, loathes the hunters but can do little about them. For each hunter she has killed, another arrives to take his place. Such is the power of hope and faith in Mexico.

Villa Alvaro Obregon

(VEE-Ya Al-Va-RRo O-Bre-Gon),

The Villa Alvaro Obregon and the districts that surround it comprise one of the major spots of political activity in Mexico City, primarily because they are so well known to tourists. The Chapultepec Forest Park is in this area, and is a central location for most of the museums in Mexico City.

Chapultepec Park

(Chop-OOL-Tep-Ek)

Chapultepec Park covers 260 square miles near the heart of Mexico City. The vast majority of the park is officially open to the public during daylight hours and unofficially open well into the night. As with most of the city, walking here after the sun has set is a good way to meet with the city's predators, human and supernatural alike.

Monumento a los Ninos Heroes - The Monument to the Young Heroes

The Monument is constructed of white marble pillars topped by bronze eagles, and is the official entry point into Chapultepec. Due to increased tourism revenue, the Sabbat have agreed not to cause any harm to visitors around the main entrance. Once past the Monument, however, everyone is fair game. A few of the Camarilla Kindred have come here in the past to discuss business with the Sabbat's leaders. Most had the sense to stay at the park's entrance and then leave the city as quickly as they could. The foolish ones entered the park proper and were never seen again.

The Castillo

(Kas-TEE-Yo)

Overlooking the main entrance to the park, the Castillo (castle) was built in 1784 under the orders of Bernardo de Galvez, Viceroy of the area, for use by the Viceroys as the leaders of Mexico City. Financial difficulties kept the Castillo uninhabited from the beginning. Uninhabited by humans, that is...

For 100 years the Castillo was used as a Haven for visiting Sabbat Kindred, a practice that came to an end as soon as the Technocracy became aware of it. In 1841, Iteration X had the castle converted into a military academy. The defense of the academy and, coincidentally the defense of Iteration X, led to the deaths of six cadets during the Mexican-American War. The Monument of the Young Heroes honors their sacrifice. Despite its history, including a brief stint as the official seat of power for Mexico, the Castillo is now of little importance to the supernaturals. These days it is a historical museum.

A zoo and botanical garden in the area, as well as an amusement park, have ensured that there is something for everyone who comes to visit Mexico City. Throughout the daylight hours, and often far into the night, peddlers walk through slow moving traffic selling plastic toys, food, and handmade clothing. Street musicians are a regular item in the area, and natives from the Otomi and Mazahua Indian tribes often come into the town to sell their wares. The natives also bring information back to their homes, information used by the Uktene Garou to keep abreast of the situation in Mexico City.

Most of Mexico City's wealthy live in this region, surrounding their houses with tall stone walls in an attempt to keep their privacy. The families that live in the area often do

their shopping in the United States, and send their children to attend universities in the U.S. as well. Most have long since moved their money into American banks, fearing the steady decline of the Mexican peso's value. The privileged are as far removed from the rest of Mexico City as their money will permit.

The Mexican Olympic Sports Center is also located in the area, along with the El Toreo Bull Ring, the largest and most popular site for bullfights in the city. Several military bases are sequestered nearby, and the Department of Defense for Mexico sits within a stone's throw of the National School of Music. Los Pinos — the Presidential Residence, the Museum of Natural History, and the National Medical Center are all located in the area as well. While not actually a part of Chapultepec Park, most of the important government buildings, including Los Pinos, are at the border of the cleanest part of the city.

The University of Mexico, the true home of the Technocracy in the city, is also present. This section is as much a tourist trap as Washington D.C.'s finer areas. Most of the Technocracy's operations run in this area, and the Sabbat leaders hold their meetings here. The Underbelly of the Wyrm completely covers the ground beneath Villa Alvaro Obregon. Almost any decision that must be made for any faction of the humans is made here. The same can be said about the Awakened and the Kindred. Here, more than anywhere else in the city, political back-stabbing is an art form. No one who enters the area is safe from tight scrutiny by all factions.

The Zocalo

(ZO-Ka-Lo)

The very heart of Mexico City is called the Zocalo. The people of Mexico believe that the greatest archaeological find of all time rests here: the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan. Over 6,000 artifacts and several buildings were found and excavated in 1978. Among them is a relief of Coyolxauhqui (one of the goddesses destroyed by Huitzilopochtli) and the Tzompantli — an altar made of stone skulls. Many tributes from other tribes long believed destroyed by the Europeans and the Aztecs alike were found here as well. While all of the artifacts are real, the buildings are duplicates created by the Sepulchre and their followers in the Underbelly of the Wyrm (see the description below).

Among the numerous relics are several fetishes and items of power, all held in secure cases and watched diligently by the Technocracy's forces. The Great Stone of Coyolxauhqui, along with the smaller one found by during the excavation, have both been preserved and held in museums, much to Huitzilopochtli's displeasure. Some believe the Great Stone and its smaller counterpart hold substantial power, but none know how to use them. Coyolxauhqui was the Aztec name for Luna, and the Bone Gnawers believe that the monolithic stones hold the key to destroying the Wyrm's influence in Mexico City. No one can say for certain. Whatever the stones' purpose, Huitzilopochtli does not like them.



Near the site of the excavations, the Museum for the Beheaded was built to house the treasures found during the digs. The museum is dedicated to every aspect of Aztec mythology and history, from the first days before Huitzilopochtli's appearance to the final days when Cortes arrived.

Other prominent buildings in the area include the National Palace, the official home of the President of Mexico; the museum of Mexico City; the Hospital de Jesus Nazareno, built on the very spot where Cortes first met with Motecuzoma, and the final resting place of Cortes; the Ministry of Education and the Jesuit College of San Ildefonso. The Sabbat watch over the Jesuit College very carefully, wrongly believing that the Society of Leopold uses the building for a stronghold. The powers of Faith invested in the Holy Ground prevent them from discovering the truth.

The National University

The majority of the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico's buildings were built specifically to hold the massive school from 1950 -1955. The university is almost a separate city in itself, with over 100 buildings ranging from the 10-story Library to the 15-story Chancellery Building. Private grocery stores and bars that cater almost exclusively to the 300,000 students and teachers cover the grounds, existing between the larger building of advanced learning.

The Institute of Cosmic Ray Research is the primary meeting place for Technocracy symposiums in Mexico City. With the exception of Iteration X, all of the Technocracy's forces in Mexico hold their seats of power in the University City. The Umbrahere is a strange blend of Weaver and Wyrm, seen by the Technocracy as a sterile environment in which to perform their experiments. Visiting Members of the Technocracy would be appalled at the twisted working conditions within the Constructs of the Mexican Technomancers, if they were permitted to see them.

Many of the poorer citizens have been forced from their homes to make way for new buildings as the University expands. Growth here has been cancerous; the university was originally designed to hold only 26,000 students, and now holds 12 times that number. To the Technocracy's way of thinking, no harm is done, as long as more of the Sleepers are Awakened to the proper ways of thinking.

Despite the best efforts of the Mexican government, the homeless and hopeless are often drawn to the area. All attempts to drive them away and to keep the area clean and pristine have failed. Among these homeless drifters, the Bone Gnawers of the Sweet Water Sept listen and learn as much as they can of the Sabbat and the Technocracy.

Outside the City

Xochimilco

(ZO-Kee-Nil-KO)

Xochimilco is best known for its floating gardens and canals. Xochimilco is not truly a part of Mexico City, and is almost untouched by the Wyrm. One area in Xochimilco is a Glade, an uncorrupted place. The local Balam, or were-jaguars, keep it that way.

Many Garou have noted sadly that the area is ripe for a caern, but no one dares to open one for fear of the Balam or the mages. In 1890, a large pack of Get of Fenris decided that enough was enough and attempted to create a caern in the area. No one is certain what happened to them, but they were never seen again. The Balam claim never to have seen the Get.

The Balam will not get involved in the war for dominance in Mexico City, and are seldom seen outside of Xochimilco. The Balam hold domain in the area and, despite the best attempts of the Sepulcher, few fomori or Banes have survived the area for long.

Teotihuacan

(TE-O-Tee-Who-Ah-Khan)

Teotihuacán is actually to the north of modern day Mexico City, but deserves brief mention because of the excavated Aztec temples and pyramids preserved for all to see. These excavations are not a part of the Underbelly and do not radiate with Huitzilopochtli's influence. Here, not more than a day's travel from Mexico City, the Dreamspeaker mages and the Uktena Garou still hold their regular meetings.

Here as nowhere else, the beautiful aspects of the Aztec Empire can still be seen and appreciated. In Teotihuacán, the past is remembered not for the savagery of conquest and the devastation caused by a ruthless army, but for the peace that Quetzalcoatl tried to achieve before going on his journey. The Dreamspeakers and Uktena seldom frequent Mexico City, normally only coming into the nest of Wyrms when the time for the Rites of the Dead have come around again.

Popocatepetl

(PO-PO-Ka-Teh-Petl) — Smoking Mountain and

Iztaccihuatl

(EEZ-Tok-KEE-WHO-Atl) — White Lady

The two volcanoes that stand near Mexico City have remained dormant since 1802. Most people in Mexico City expect them to stay that way. A few of the Awakened have suspicions that the Smoking Mountain is a haven for the Marauders, but no one has bothered to confirm the suspicion. The lack of interest may yet prove a fatal mistake. The Balam often pay visits to the White Lady, but refuse to discuss their reasons.

Beneath the City: The Underbelly of the Wyrm



You give me reason
You give me control
I gave you purity
My purity you stole
— Nine Inch Nails, "Sin"

The ground beneath the group's feet was sticky in some places; in others it was slick enough to make them slide into each other. The tunnel curved sinuously around bends that hid everything ahead of them from view. Nothing could have hidden the smell — the air was thick with the stench of death. Each searcher imagined what lay ahead in the darkness: Grimm thought of his parents' bodies putrefying in the living room, waiting with bloated smiles and jellied eyes, just as he'd found them when he returned from his summer camp so long ago. He tried to stop the images, but they forced themselves across his mind's eye, showing him dried black blood on his father's hands, and the maggots that crawled from his mother's left ear.

Beside him, one of the Garou snarled deep in her throat, a faint nervous rumble that sounded too much like Grimm's own false bravado. They rounded the last bend, and the darkness

opened up to them, revealing all the secrets of hell and a few more sights they never expected.

The Underbelly is perhaps one the most corrupt places on Earth. The residual sewage from centuries of Shaitan's domination and unspeakable human misery has collected in the ruins of old Mexico, deep beneath the modern city's streets. This degraded manifestation has summoned a horde of the foulest Awakened imaginable. The result is a combination Black Spiral Dancer hive, Nephandi Labyrinth and Nosferatu antitribu warren.

The dark Awakened have banded together into a collective under the leadership of the Sepulchre. By all reason, this grotesque amalgam should not work. Unfortunately, the Sepulchre and Underbelly of the Wyrm not only work, they prosper.

Caern: The understructure of Mexico City and the true ruins of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco.

Level: 5

Gauntlet: 2

Type: Organism/Angst

Tribal Structure: Unique



R.M.

Totem: The Hydra— The Underbelly of the Wyrm accepts and embraces all forms of the Wyrm.

Geography: The Underbelly of the Wyrm is located below Mexico City, and below the false ruins of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. False ruins have been created and maintained by the Nephandi mages with whom the Black Spiral Dancers consort.

Bawn: The makeup of the Underbelly is the false ruins of Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan. Anything not of the Wyrm that comes below this point will be destroyed by the powers of the Sepulchre.

Center: The center of the caern lies in the true pyramid of Huitzilopochtli. The enormous numbers of sacrifices made here in the past have generated a powerful focal point for the Wyrm. The entire Hive has been moved by powerful Rites and by the magick of the Nephandi — the Hive is actually 5,000 feet below the deepest sections of the false Tenochtitlan.

Landmarks: The whole of the Wyrm's Underbelly is a gigantic landmark, provided a person can ever find it. However, at the very center of the largest pyramid, a wetly glistening black entity grows; its body pulses and moves, a cancerous growth that began expanding at an accelerated rate in recent years. This polypous mass is called the Pandemonium.

The Nephandi Caul, the place of "rebirth," resides within the Pandemonium. This living entity filters a mage's Avatar through its corruption, "flipping" the Avatar until

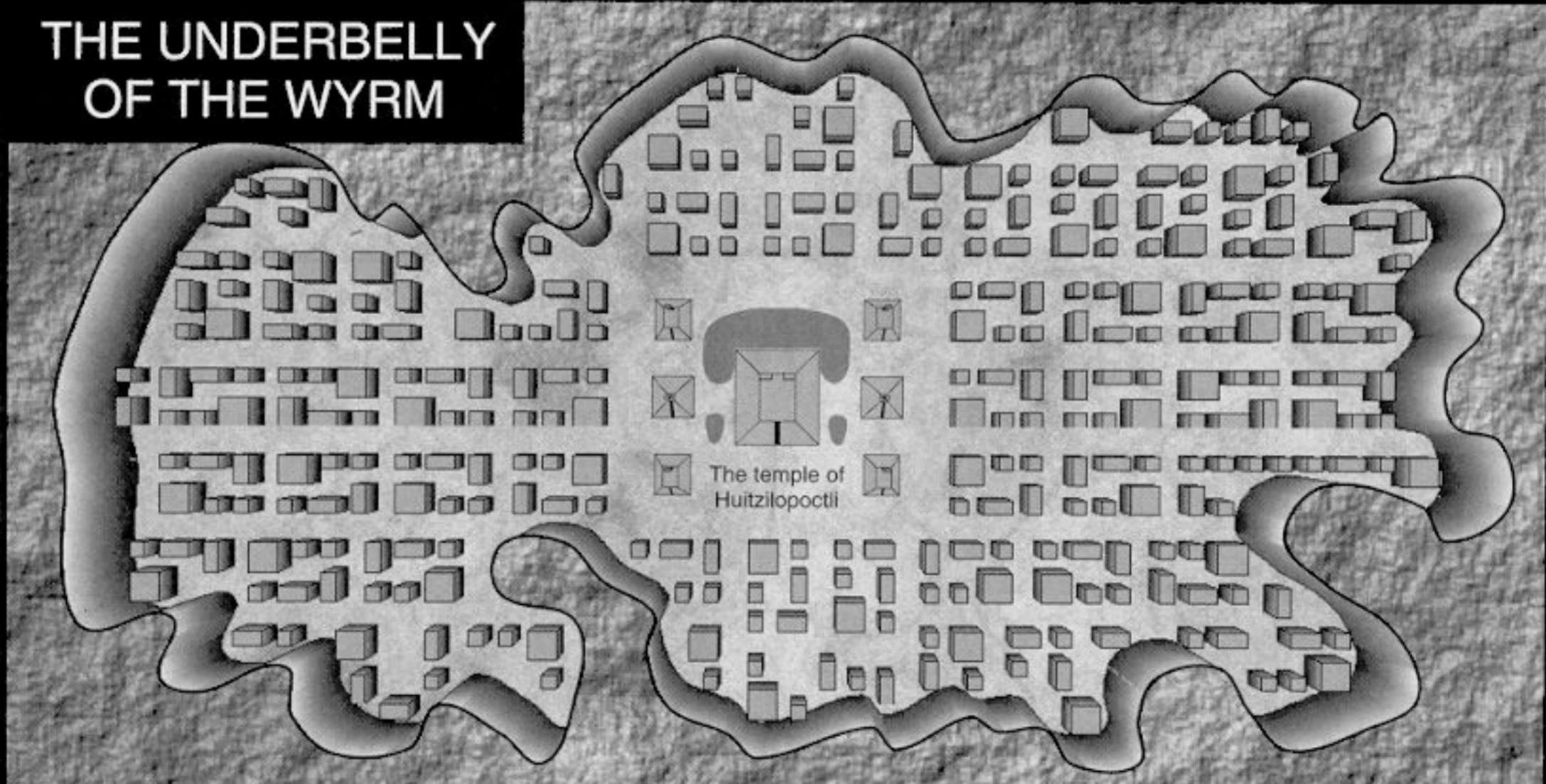
all goodness has been converted to a like amount of evil. The Black Spirals have a similar way of converting their captives — the madness-inducing Black Spiral. The Underbelly has a direct route, a column, to Malfeas, the Realm of the Wyrm. In Malfeas, the Black Spiral awaits. Captured Garou are often forced to dance the Spiral until they too become the mad werewolves named in the Spiral's honor.

The Warren of the Nosferatu is not in the Pandemonium, but many explore the organic lump to "play" around the Caul. Aside from a darkening of their warty hides, the Nosferatu that try Dancing the Spiral or being Rejuvenated in the Caul seem no worse for wear.

A substantial colony of Vhujunka coexists with the other horrors of the Sepulchre. There have been battles between them in the past, but those times are over for now. The city of these strange creatures exists both in the Umbra and the material world.

Umbrascape/Horizon Realm: It just doesn't get any worse. The Umbrascape seethes with Banes of all types, thriving on the toxic waste and misery from above. The area is pitch black, illuminated only by sickly green lichen that rise to heights of 300 feet, and deep pools of Wyrmseed boil in what was once a part of Lake Tezcoco. Malignant things move in those waters, some flopping about, and others moving with unsettling grace; no one who is not of the Wyrm has seen them clearly and lived. Among the obscenities are guardians of the Nephandi, creatures only partially created by them. Aquatic forms of thunderwyrms,

THE UNDERBELLY OF THE WYRM



Drawing by Brian J. Blume

Wakshaa and H'rugg are among them as well. The extremely toxic environment of the Umbrascape has no apparent affect on the Nephandi.

Nodes: The Black Spiral Dancers allow the mages to use their Hive as a Node in return for favors. Additionally, the Labyrinth has found that the pools surrounding the Pandemonium, where their pet monstrosities exist, contain enormous amounts of Tass. The supply is seemingly limitless, but the writhing forms that move beneath the glowing waters take great offense if more than 20 points of Tass are removed in a day.

The bloated things that slither through the brackish water are often visited by the Nosferatu; the *antitribu* Kindred have taken to gorging themselves on the blood of the homeless, often killing their victims in the process, and then spilling generous amounts of their own Vitae into the murky luminescence of the waters. Whatever lives in the depths has been growing substantially since this practice was begun. Ten of the pyramids located in the Underbelly also work as Nodes; these have been linked directly to the Caul inside Huitzilopochtli's pyramid and draw together the life-force of the wretched millions living above. The Caul of the Nephandi and the Black Spiral occupy the same space in both the Umbra and the material world.

History: The great Underbelly was built during the late 1500s and has been growing at a cancerous rate ever since. The Sabbat drove all Garou from their city during the last 20 years of the 15th century, forcing the Black Spiral Dancers underground. Technocracy forces never noticed any signs of the Nephandi in the City, and would surely have destroyed them on sight. The Nephandi, like the Black Spiral Dancers, had been there all along, but it was not until the Wyrm's Garou were driven beneath the ground that they came to see each other as potential allies. Eversince the Underbelly's minions joined forces some 473 years ago, the influence of these beings has intensified. Over the centuries they have come to live in a unique harmony, adding Nosferatu *antitribu* and the Malfean wraiths to their numbers and allying themselves with the Vhujunka.

These rejects from the surface world share a special camaraderie, an unsettling companionship that is closer to family than most of the supernaturals could hope to understand. Above, they are rivals in their way, but in the Underbelly, all are accepted as equals. The hopes and desires of the Underbelly's minions are expressed openly, and all work together to ensure that all are content.

When mortals planned in the late 1970s to expand the sewers above the Underbelly to new depths, the Nephandi and the Black Spiral Dancers joined together to Co-Locate the entire infrastructure 5000 feet lower than it originally was. The Nephandi's magick was powerful, and the Gnosis freely given by the Dancers assured their success. Several of the minions died in the successful attempt, but they have since been replaced. The Pandemonium is still in the First Season, the Spring of its existence. The Wraiths of the



Underbelly see their living counterparts as equals only because both parties serve the Wyrm. Should any grow weak or hesitant, the wraiths descend on them viciously, delivering them to their final reward.

Politics: The Hive, Labyrinth and Warren have merged as time has passed. A few of the most corrupt individuals work together, joining the Awakened, Garou and Kindred in a community that simply should not work, but does just the same. The temperament of the various groups is extremely violent, yet they work together well — too well, some would say, for the alliance to be completely natural.

The most powerful members of each subsection of the Underbelly meet once a month to discuss maintenance and expansion of the already substantial Labyrinth/Hive/Warren. They almost always come up with something new and deadly to use against their mutual enemies, and they almost never argue amongst themselves. The leaders of the entire affair are referred to as the Sepulchre. Over the centuries they have become trusted allies, if not friends, to one another. As time has passed, they have come to know each other as fellow soldiers in the battle for corruption.

And all that occurs in the Pandemonium, the Underbelly of the Wyrm, follows the plans of Huitzilopochtli.

Beyond the City: Paraiso Vista & the Dragon's Lair



Of the good in you I can speak, but not of the evil.

For what is evil but good tortured by its own hunger and thirst?

Verily when good is hungry it seeks food even in dark caves, and when it thirsts it drinks even from dead waters.

— Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*

Some 80 miles north of Mexico City, Paraiso Vista rests in idyllic seclusion. There is little to see, save for farm houses and a few larger houses used by the town for communal meetings and as the mayor's offices. A long dirt road leads away from Paraiso Vista, down towards the areas where the rest of the world slowly rots in the Wyrm's corruption.

The town is situated on a sheer cliff, one that plummets downward into the valley below on the south side of the mountain. Towards the north a small stream, Diaz Tears, runs past the town, filling the small lake with fresh water. On both the eastern and western slopes, blocked off by the mountain and sturdy wooden fences, pastures and crop fields grow in harmony.

In the mountain's face, to the north of town where the river runs, an oddly shaped hillock is all that can be seen of Huitzilopochtli's Haven. The Haven was carved into the mountain over 500 years ago, and since then the one entrance has been completely covered by dirt and foliage. Beneath the grass and plant life, a massive stone head — shaped much like a dragon from distant Eastern legends — lies hidden from human eyes. No vampiric Discipline or Garou Gift has ever detected the area, and none of the Awakened are familiar with the power that rests beneath a few hundred feet of ground. Huitzilopochtli's power is sub-

stantial, and no one has reason to believe the god of war has ever been near the town of Paraiso Vista.

But he has, and he has made the town his own. The ground is soft, and the stream that runs down from the mountain hides the mouth of the Dragon's Lair. Behind the stream a small doorway is hidden by the granite rocks carefully placed before the entrance. This barrier is the only physical entrance into Huitzilopochtli's Haven. No one has opened the entrance since the Aztec war god sealed himself there over 300 years ago.

Three chambers exist beyond the barrier that hides the lair. The first is filled with the bodies of Huitzilopochtli's victims, four of his own Get consumed over the years. They were all guilty of showing compassion, and were destroyed for it. Aside from the powdery remains, there is nothing to see save the stone door that leads into Huitzilopochtli's Antechamber.

In the Antechamber, a corroded bronze statue rests against one wall. This statue resembles a human face, distorted by anger and sporting a mouth filled with silver teeth. The mouth contains four hearts, all amazingly well preserved; the hearts of Huitzilopochtli's compassionate Childer.

In the last room, a stone altar fully 15 feet in length and seven feet in height takes almost all of the room available. There is also room for a small pool of water that trickles down to flow into a dark crack in the ground. From there, it runs beneath the ground to rejoin Diaz Tears. The water is tinged red from the blood that Huitzilopochtli has shared with Paraiso Vista over the centuries. The Altar holds exactly three items: two large iron daggers forged long before Babylon fell, and the conscious form of Huitzilopochtli.

PARAISO VISTA

↑ to
Huitzilopochtli's
Haven

Church Ruins

General Store

Mayor

Town Square

Inn

Sheriff

Map by Brian J. Blume





Chapter Two: Denizens of Mexico City

*That was the souls' strange mine.
Like silent silver ore they wandered
Through its dark like veins.*
— Rainer Maria Rilke, "Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes"



Mexico City is filled to bursting with strange threats and helpful Awakened. The characters in this chapter are merely a small sample of the dozens of supernaturals darkening Mexico City's haunted streets. Space prohibits a full and detailed listing of all denizens of the city, but Storytellers should feel free to make up or change whatever characters they wish to appear.

Many of these supernaturals may have objects of power — Talismans, Fetishes and such. Many of the objects described in these listings have some significance to the "Chaos Factor" storyline. Minor objects are not listed. For simplicity, Storytellers are advised to avoid burdening their characters (and themselves) with endless lists of "treasure types." Instead, use discretion and treat such items as plot devices. If your players need a Talisman or two to ensure their survival, give them one in the hands of an opponent — one they can overcome if they use their wits.

New Terms

Some Mage players will be unfamiliar with Vampire and Werewolf game terminology. The following explanations will save a Storyteller endless headaches. Veteran White Wolf Storytellers may ignore this section. For more details, see Appendix Two.

Vampire

Sire: The vampire who Embraced this character.

Generation: The relative power of a vampire, based on the purity of lineage to Caine, the original Kindred.

Embrace: The ecstasy/agony of dying and becoming reborn as a vampire. The date given is the date of the character's rebirth.

Virtues: Attributes measuring a Kindred's general strength of character. Sabbat have different "values" than Camarilla vampires, as they embrace their inhumanity while the Camerilla seek to retain theirs.

Disciplines: The semi-magickal powers of the vampire. These powers do not invoke Paradox, but allow Kindred some degree of paranormal ability within set parameters. For details, see *Vampire: The Masquerade*.

Haven: The vampire's safe resting place.

Humanity: A measure of the Kindred's remaining ties to humanity. Sabbat vampires do not have this problem.

Werewolf

Breed: The original species to which the Garou once "belonged." Homids were raised among normal humans; Lupus ran with the wolves, literally. Metis Garou are sterile and deformed offspring of inter-werewolf mating — a forbidden practice among most Garou.

Auspice: A werewolf's "moon-sign." Garou often take their roles in society from the phase of the moon under which they were born.

Tribe: The Garou tribes each practice a particular mindset and culture. You can tell a fair amount about a werewolf if you know which tribe he belongs to.

Gifts: Like Disciplines, these spirit-magick powers sidestep Paradox but only achieve certain fixed effects. The Levels of these Gifts are given in parentheses.

Rank: The measure of status that a given werewolf has within her society.

Rage: The primal fury of the Garou; like Quintessence, this Rage may be used for a character's benefit — fueling extra actions or changing shape. The more Rage a werewolf has, the worse his temper is...

Gnosis: The innate connection of a werewolf to the elemental spirit of the Earth. Similar to a mage's Arete, Gnosis allows the Garou to utilize her Gifts.

Rites: Rituals of the Garou; some serve a social purpose, while others harness a complicated sort of ritual magick.

Format

This chapter presents the characters of the upper and lower worlds of Mexico City. The relationships between the various characters can be seen in the charts given within each section. Mage characters are given first, followed by werewolves, vampires, and optional wraiths. These last are intended for role-playing only. Statistics for wraiths are not given here.

The supernaturals remain largely ignorant of the other beings. Few Kindred know, or care, about the Ascension War. A mage is a mage is a mage. Likewise, most mages know nothing of the divisions between Sabbat and Camarilla, or Bone Gnawer and Black Spiral. This ignorance leaves blind spots that knowledgeable characters can exploit if need be.

The Awakened of Mexico City:



*These stand for me
Name your god and bleed the freak
I like to see
How you all would bleed for me*
— Alice In Chains, "Bleed The Freak"

The Awakened of Mexico City suffer from corruptive influences beyond their control. Most of the Technocracy's leaders do not act as they would if they lived in any other part of the world. All of the Technomancers suffer from levels of paranoia and anger that have blinded them to their own faults, while simultaneously making them see the faults of their counterparts with perfect clarity. They do not know whom to trust, and so they trust no one. If not for the problems they face in dealing with each other, Mexico City would be a perfect example of the Technocracy's goals. As it stands, there are too many leaders and not enough followers.

The Technocracy

*Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good,
A shining gloss that vadeth suddenly,
A flower that dies when first it gins to bud,
A brittle glass that's broken presently:
A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,
Lost, vaded, broken, dead within an hour.*
— Shakespeare, *Passionate Pilgrim* #13

The Technocracy owns Mexico City — there are 19 Technomancers working around the city — but the local mages have been so corrupted by Huitzilopochtli that their worst traits lie close to the surface, muddling their vision and tainting their purposes. They are a potent force nonetheless — they can assemble a formidable army if need be by calling upon outside comrades. Though the laziness and greed of the Mexican Technocrats is well-known, the true extent and nature of their corruption remains a secret to all within and without the Technocracy.



Montego Diaz - Quetzalcoatl

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Pattern

Convention: New World Order

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Expression 4, Intuition 3, Intimidation 1

Skills: Etiquette 4, Leadership 5, Meditation 4, Research 5, Survival 3, Computer 5

Knowledges: Cosmology 2, Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Science 5

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Forces 5, Life 4, Mind 4, Matter 4, Prime 5, Spirit 4

Backgrounds: Resources 5, Library 5, Destiny 4, Influence 5, Avatar 4, Node 5

Arete 8, Willpower 7, Quintessence 14, Paradox 5

Background: I have long since learned the errors of my ways. I believed once that the only way to Ascension was to be at one with Gaia. I know better now. The only way to Ascension is to ensure that everyone follows the Technocracy. There is so much that technology can give, so much more than we could ever learn from dreams. I came home to Mexico to tell my followers that there was only one way for them to live, but they had found a new being to call a god, a being that they made blood sacrifices to, a being that they murdered thousands for. They had to be taught a lesson: no one escapes from their destiny, no one escapes from Ascension. Mexico will be enlightened, even if so many have to suffer and die for the few who can Awaken.

Image: Diaz looks to be in his late 40's. He has short black hair and dark brown skin. His eyes are haunted by too many years of seeing his people suffer while he tries to make their lives better. Normally, he can be found wearing a dark blue suit and carrying a briefcase. He is never without several Men in Black at his side.

Roleplaying Notes: You are old and tired, but your beliefs are strong. You have been a principal mover in the shaping of Mexico City, and you plan to make certain that it stays that way. You have immense dossiers on the Kindred, and you work to ensure that they keep their place without causing too much harm to the unAwakened. The Black Spiral Dancers must be destroyed, and they would be, if only you knew where they were hiding. Somewhere along the way, you've come to think of yourself as the real Quetzalcoatl, forgetting that you merely inhabit his body.



Maria de Guadalupe

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Critic

Essence: Questing

Convention: Iteration X

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Intuition 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Meditation 3, Research 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Enigmas 2, Medicine 4, Science 5

Spheres: Correspondence 5, Forces 4, Life 3, Mind 4, Matter 3, Prime 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Avatar 3, Chantry 3, Library 4
Arete 6, Willpower 9, Quintessence 15, Paradox 2

Background: Have you looked at the world beyond the daylight? There are creatures out there that should not be tolerated, that cannot be allowed to exist. I refuse to tolerate the vampires. My HIT Marks are ready, and perfectly able to remove the thrice-cursed creatures. Already the remains of 17 bloodsuckers are being processed, catalogued and dissected. We estimate that there are some 30 left in the town, but they will be removed. The plans for industrialization in the Mexico Valley continue, and the eventual reduction in belief in a false god continues apace. Soon, the appalling crime rate will be taken care of, but first arrangements must be made with the Syndicate.

It was much easier to convince the populace that I was a messenger of God than it has been to convince them that God is dead. I have seen the errors that I made in my youth. Why can't the people of Mexico City see the errors that they have made?

Image: Maria de Guadalupe is a beautiful woman. Her hair is perfect, her figure is perfect, and her face is a study of grace and beauty. All of this is secondary to the anger that lies just under the surface of her physical perfection. As long as things continue to fall short of her expectations, she will always be less than what she appears.

Roleplaying Notes: Nothing bothers you more than a person with an attitude: attitudes lead to disorder. Speak clearly and concisely; do not make gestures. You have strong opinions, but they do not have a place right now. The time has come to remove the rubbish that lines the streets of the city, especially the human rubbish. If subordinates talk back to you, crisply remind them that the streets are filled with people too stupid to mind their tongues, as are the cemeteries.



Robert Lawson

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Pattern

Convention: Syndicate

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Expression 4, Intuition 5, Intimidation 5

Knowledges: Etiquette 3, Firearms 5, Leadership 5, Survival 5

Skills: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 5, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Science 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 3, Life 4, Mind 3, Matter 2, Prime 2, Spirit 4

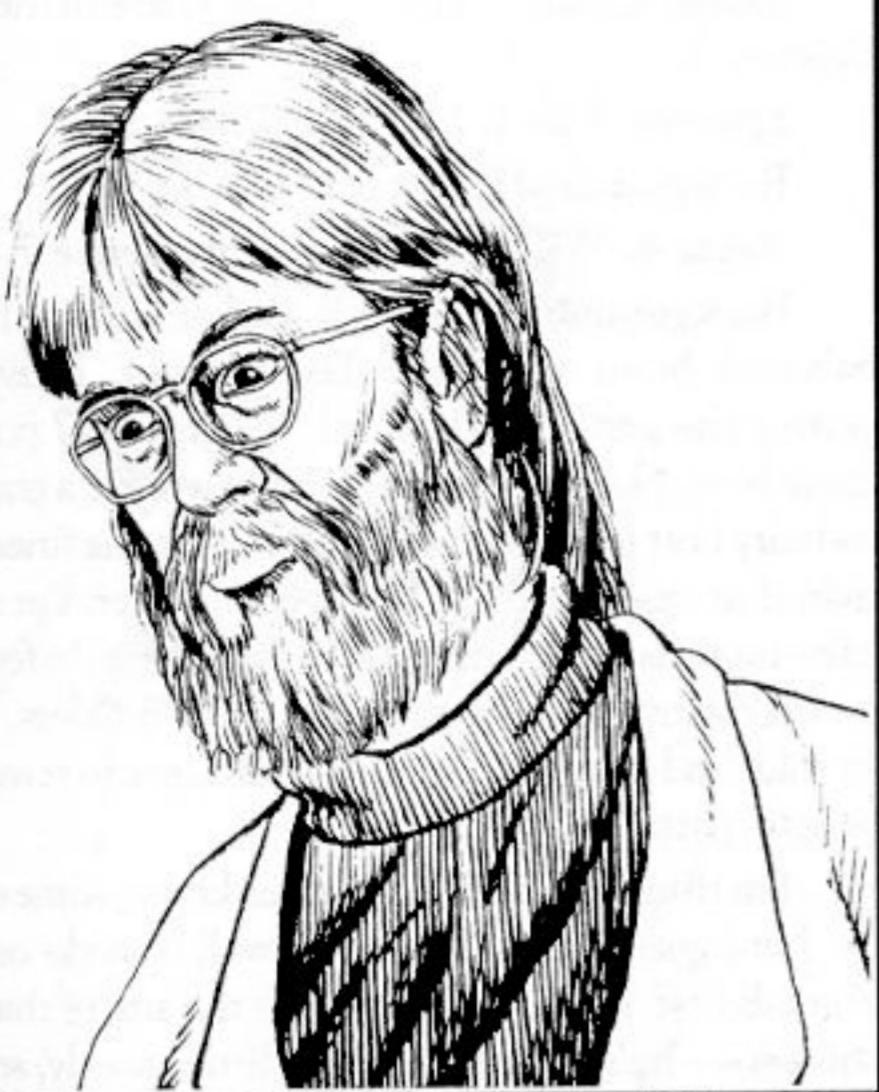
Backgrounds: Resources 5, Library 4, Influence 5, Avatar 2, Node 5

Arete 6, Willpower 7, Quintessence 17, Paradox: 3

Background: Let's have an understanding. I rule this city. I am this city. To hell with what all of the others say; this city is under control. Sure, the pollution is heavy; sure, the population is too big. So who cares? The Sleepers work, they live, and they die. And in the meantime, they have uses that so few can see. Where do you think all of the material for the Constructs comes from? Do you think it grows on trees? Hell no! It grows on bones, baby, it grows on human bones. Research and Development, that's the secret to a good company. R&D needs guinea pigs, and I provide them. You watch and you wait, soon enough you'll see what's going down. I got big plans, and they're just about ready for the world to see.

Image: Home town scum does well. Robert Lawson is a nasty-looking punk in clothes that cost more than most of the people in Mexico City make in a year. His hair is always perfectly groomed and his teeth have been capped to make them pearly white. No one who knows Lawson likes him, but they all listen to him. He is too well connected to ignore.

Roleplaying Notes: You know you're the boss, and you know you're the best damn thing happening in Mexico City. The Sleepers are only there to be used as needed, and the good folks at Pentex are in your pocket. If the other Conventions give you too much crap, you'll be ready for them.



Doctor Niles Anderson

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Director

Essence: Questing

Convention: Progenitors

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Awareness 4, Expression 3, Intuition 4, Subterfuge 1

Knowledges: Etiquette 2, Meditation 3, Research 5, Survival 2

Skills: Cosmology 4, Culture 2, Enigmas 5, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Science 5

Spheres: Entropy 4, Forces 3, Life 5, Matter 5, Prime 5, Time 3

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Chantry 4, Avatar 5, Library 3

Arete: 7, Willpower 8, Quintessence 12, Paradox 7

Background: It's all such amazing stuff. If I had more than 24 hours in a day, I would use each and every one of them to study the effects of fusing genetic patterns together. I used to just study the effects of radiation on the human body, but the work wasn't satisfying; I could never get the samples until after I had filled out a thousand forms and waited for a hundred days. They were much more understanding about the project to build a perfect soldier, at least until they saw the results. Hey, we all make mistakes. I'm getting better at it all the time. Just last week I created a fireproof cockroach. I know, I know, what good is it? Well, it's fireproof. Think about what that could mean for firemen! And I've extended the lifespan of the common house fly to some 3,000 years. Just imagine the opportunity to study its offspring and see just how dominant the new gene is!

The consequences are unimportant; all that matters is knowledge that a thing can be done. Why, one of my greatest successes to date involved taking a young girl and merging her with fast growing yeast: so far her size has increased by over 4,000 percent, and each part that we slice off continues to grow at the same rate, and to scream just as loudly as the original did. Just imagine what that kind of applied knowledge can do for world starvation...

Image: Tall and skinny, too much hair and too little hygiene. Anderson is known for wearing the same clothes for days on end, changing only if it is absolutely necessary. He is never seen without a cup of coffee.

Roleplaying Notes: Everyone is unimportant. Nothing matters but your work. You must understand all of the complexities that exist. You must make the Sleepers see that anything at all is possible. If anyone gets in your way, kill them. After all, they're only meat. Or, try to capture them alive; there is always such a shortage of willing subjects. The special storage facilities you had placed under the main labs contain the results from your failed experiments. Most of them are still alive.

Lisa Willonby

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Conformist

Essence: Pattern

Convention: Progenitors, once Orphan

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Intuition 3, Intimidation 1

Knowledges: Etiquette 4, Leadership 2, Meditation 4, Research 5, Cosmology 3

Skills: Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4, Medicine 3, Occult 5, Science 5



Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 2, Life 4, Mind 2, Prime 3

Backgrounds: Mentor 5, Resources 5, Avatar 2, Node 5

Arete 4, Willpower 9, Quintessence 10, Paradox 7

Background: I really don't care much about genetics, but they fascinate Niles, and as long as they fascinate him, I'll work with them. Anything to make Niles happy. Niles says I have potential, and since I joined up with him, he's always happy to see me. I think that one day we'll get married. I told my friend Angela what Niles said about my having potential, and she told me to leave him for another mentor. She said nasty, horrible things about him. I showed her; now she's a mushroom and she screams and screams and screams. Anything to make Niles happy, anything at all.

Image: Lisa is a short, chunky girl with a skin complexion that strongly resembles pizza. She is always dour and moody, except when Niles is near.

Roleplaying Notes: Anything to make Niles happy, anything at all. You want to catch his attention, and sometimes the best way to do that is to bring him new materials for his experiments. You've been trying very hard to find a good, healthy werewolf to deliver to him. You know how much he wants one.

Justin Wadsworth

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Fanatic

Essence: Questing

Convention: Progenitors

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 6, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Expression 3, Intuition 2

Knowledges: Meditation 5, Research 5, Survival 2



Skills: Cosmology 3, Culture 1, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Science 5

Spheres: Life 4, Matter 2, Prime 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Library 4

Arete 4, Willpower 6, Quintessence 7, Paradox 12

Background: Let me tell you something; I don't give a baboon's brain about the Technocracy. I just care about getting the perfect body. I only weighed 127 pounds when I came here. Now look at me! I could wrestle a gorilla and kick its hairy butt in under five seconds. I am the finest example of man that exists, and just keep getting finer. I'm outta here in a few months, and then it's on to the Mister Perfection contest to make my mark among the body builders. Who needs steroids and growth hormones when you can rewrite your own genetic pattern?

I'm thinking about maybe marketing some of my formulas, but I guess I should test how well it works on some more animals first. Man, you should see the size of that bear I used this on — he's huge. He's also a little moody, so I keep him locked up.

Image: Shave a gorilla, oil its body, add blue eyes and blond hair. Throw in perfect teeth and just for fun, add about 200 pounds of muscle. That's a good start. Justin stands all of 5' 7" in height, and is almost as wide. Even when he is relaxed, every cord of muscle on his body stands out in perfect relief. His biceps are as wide as most men's torsos, and his neck is substantially wider than his head. The only reason he is allowed to continue working with the Progenitors is that they carefully monitor his changes. So far, Niles Anderson has noticed over 700 deviations from the original genetic pattern of his second lab assistant.

When the boy has finally gone too far, Niles wants to examine his remains and discover just how it is that someone so abysmally stupid managed to Awaken.

Roleplaying Notes: Nobody's home, but they left the lights on. You are a narcissistic moron, and you use every chance you get to flaunt your muscles in front of anyone who will look.

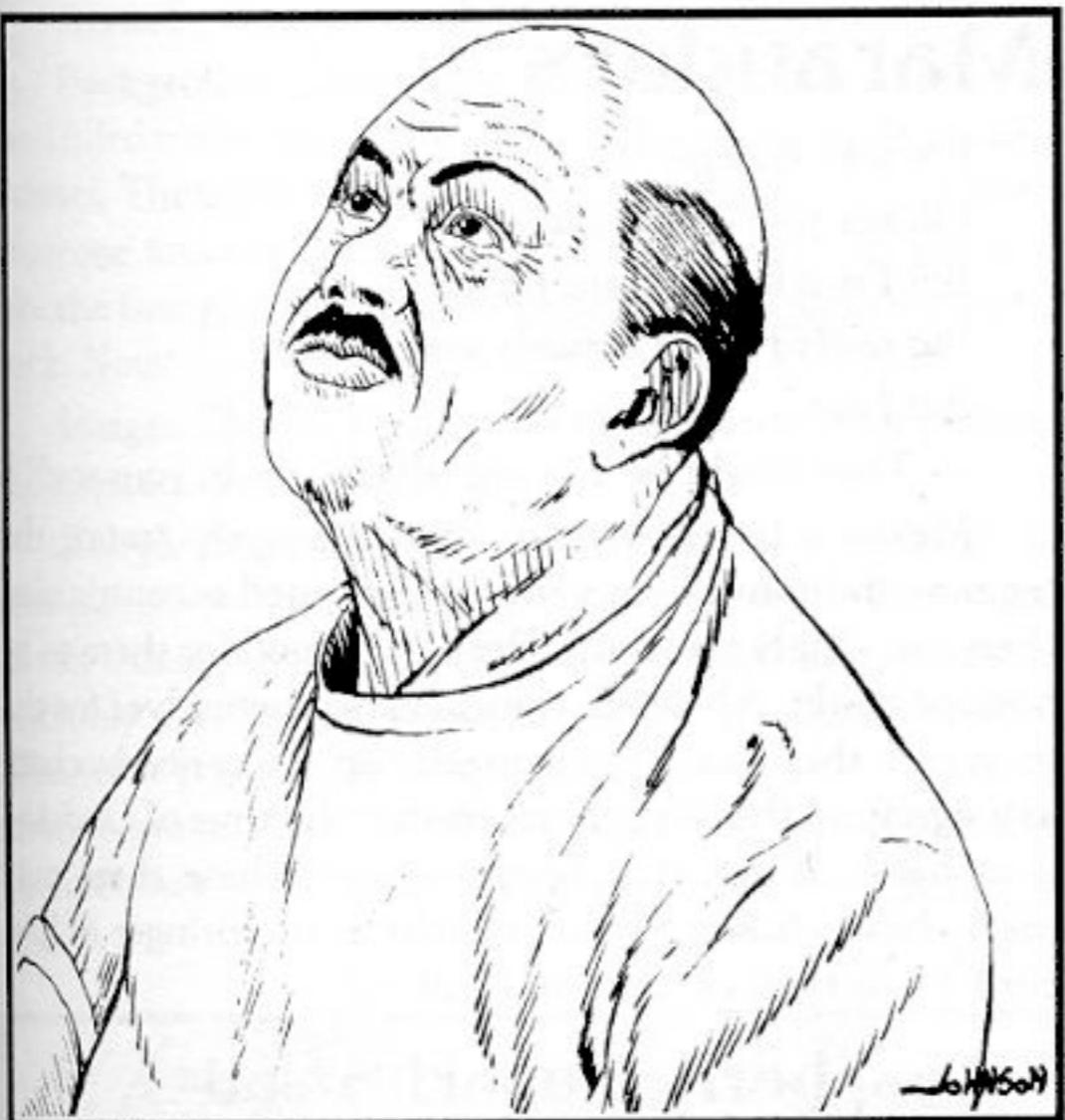
Tradition Mages

If the world is ruled by demons and monsters, we might as well give up right now.

— Dana Andrews, *Curse of the Demon*

Few Tradition mages dare this Technocracy stronghold for any length of time — few outside of the Celestial Chorus, who have chosen this city as their protectorate. From a dozen scattered missions throughout the area, ten Chorus mages work overtime to tend their folks, waiting for reinforcements that may never come.

The tiny Chantries of Mexico do not access Horizon Realms — to construct one in an area of such heavy Technocratic influence would be suicide. And so the mages of Mexico dwell in poverty with their Sleeper brethren — such are the wages of Ascension in Mexico.



Bernardino de Sahagun

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Caregiver

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Celestial Chorus

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Expression 4, Intuition 3

Knowledges: Etiquette 5, Leadership 3, Meditation 4, Research 5, Survival 5

Skills: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 4, Investigation 2, Linguistics 5, Medicine 3, Occult 2, Science 3

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 5, Life 4, Mind 2, Matter 3, Prime 5, Spirit 4, Time 2

Backgrounds: Resources 5, Library 4, Influence 3, Avatar 5, Node 5

Arete 8, **Willpower** 10, **Quintessence** 17, **Paradox** 3

Background: It was decided that at least a few of the Chorus should come with the settlers that followed Cortes into Tenochtitlan. There were many of the Cabal of Pure Thought already going, and as the need to hide was great, I was elected. The Order of Reason would want to destroy everything. They almost succeeded in their plans.

I was appalled from the first moment I came in contact with the people; they were so innocent, certainly not the vile monsters that we had heard about. But there was something in the city, something that was truly evil. Whenever I have sought to find it, it hides itself again. I have been called a great man by the Sleepers, simply because I took the time to learn the language of the Aztecs and took the time to make their transition into "proper society" as painless as possible.

I have seen the Sabbat Kindred; I have seen the demonic Black Spiral Dancers. Were we of the Celestial Chorus to leave, who would watch over these poor souls? I have been here for almost 600 years, I have hidden myself and changed my body a dozen times — I have trouble remembering what I once looked like, it has been so long — most of my life has been spent trying to stop the foul things from destroying the people I came to love. I am losing the fight, but I would die myself if I stopped trying.

Image: Sahagun is a pudgy Hispanic man, apparently in his late fifties... at least for the present time. His eyes are blue, and filled with remorse for things that might have been. Sahagun's skin is mottled from too many hours in the sun, and his features are all but hidden in the wrinkles of his skin.

Roleplaying Notes: You are congenial and friendly. You listen to the confessions of a large portion of Mexico City's Old Town regularly, and you are filled with grief at the losses these people suffer. You always wonder if you could have done more for them. Deep in your heart, you know you could have if you had not been so very afraid.

Motolina

Nature: Traditionalist

Demeanor: Penitent

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Celestial Chorus

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Expression 3, Intuition 5, Intimidation 4

Knowledges: Etiquette 3, Firearms 5, Leadership 3, Meditation 4, Melee 5, Research 5, Survival 3



Skills: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 5, Linguistics 5, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 4

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 5, Life 4, Mind 4, Matter 3, Prime 5, Spirit 4, Time 2

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Chantry 4, Avatar 4, Library 4

Arete 8, Willpower 8, Quintessence 12, Paradox 8

Background: I came with Cortes, and with Quetzalcoatl. I came in the guise of a soldier and fought as a soldier. I watched the greatest city known to humankind at that time crumble into nothingness under the onslaught of the Spaniards and the Technocracy. I hated them all, wanted to see Cortes die painfully for his hideous actions against the Aztec peoples. I should have fought against him, and would have, but for the love of my Helena. I suffered from the Blood-Bond, addicted to the taste of her Vitae and the small times she spent with me trying to learn magick from her pet mage. I hated her with all my soul, yet could not stop loving her. Something reached out to me one night, something that shattered the bonds that tied my very essence. I do not know if I did this myself, or if it was an outside force, but I am forever grateful. Should Helena come this way again, I shall move her to the sun with my magick, regardless of the consequences to myself.

I have done my best to make amends with the people I've wronged; I have taken vows of poverty and helped a few of the more deserving win money at the bull fights. I have sped the healing process in those who were worthy, and have even brought death to the foulest of them. I have seen the signs and know that the end of my life is near if I stay here. That is just as well; I am ready to die. I am ready to serve the One in any way I can. But first, I will find what has twisted the Technocracy beyond even their own inhuman levels, and I will destroy the evil that I have sensed since first I came to Tenochtitlan.

Image: Motolina is stunning woman, one who has yet to realize the folly of what he/she has done. Motolina has reshaped his/her body from male to female, and has taken a youthful form that should long be gone. Motolina is now the spitting image of Helena, a fact that the Sabbat have taken poorly. The Sabbat are following carefully, contemplating what to do about the human that looks so much like a Methusalah.

Roleplaying Notes: You are perpetually angry, not at any one person, but more at the depths to which the city has fallen. You watch the vampires do as they please, and you watch the Technocracy. Whenever you can, you go off on tangents about how foul the Technocracy is, talking to any who will listen about the evils of the modern era. There is a strong vein of curiosity that inhibits both Motolina and Sahagun. Neither can quite understand the other's reasons for the physical changes they have each manifested. Both work together well, and are still good friends, but a feeling of slight mistrust between them has started to grow.

Marauders

I'm your little friend

I'm not your only friend

But I'm a little glowing friend

But really I'm not actually your friend

But I am

— They Might be Giants, "Birdhouse in your soul"

Mexico's few Marauders circulate freely among the teeming millions. Even with their pointed eccentricities, there are simply too many Sleepers around for them to be noticed easily. Although they keep to themselves for the most part, they will be quick to seize upon any nearby chaos as a sign from the Great Forseers that the time of Undoing is at hand. When that happens, run! These three mad mages have chosen Samuel Haight as the Bringer of Discord. He is their champion. Be afraid.

Raspberry Popart Salad

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Deviant

Essence: Primordial

Tradition: Marauder

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Awareness 1, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Expression 2, Intuition 4, Intimidation 3

Knowledges: Meditation 3, Survival 5

Skills: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 4, Occult 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 4, Life 5, Prime 5, Spirit 1

Backgrounds: Node 3



Arete 5, Willpower 9, Quintessence 9, Paradox 0

Background: Once upon a time there was a wonderful land filled with elves and dragons and oh so many delightful flowers. Then the bad people came and took it away from everyone and put garbage and lemon drops in its place. I like the first part of the story better, so I'm gonna bring it back. Now!

Image: Charles Manson on a bad hair day, but replace the swastika with a smiley face.

Roleplaying Notes: Smile! The whole wide world is your playground, and the teacher just got a five foot spike driven through her head. Remember, Lois needs you and yesterday can be tomorrow if you all try hard enough. Whenever possible, find someone having a bad day and make it worse. Also, be as blatant as you can. Make the Technocracy work hard to fix what you do whenever possible.



Aasdfkljneu Lncc

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Penitent

Essence: Primordial

Tradition: Marauder

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Expression 3, Intuition 5, Intimidation 4

Knowledges: Etiquette 3, Firearms 2, Leadership 1, Meditation 4, Survival 3

Skills: Cosmology 4, Enigmas 3, Investigation 5, Linguistics 5, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Science 2

Spheres Correspondence 5, Mind 4, Prime 3, Time 4

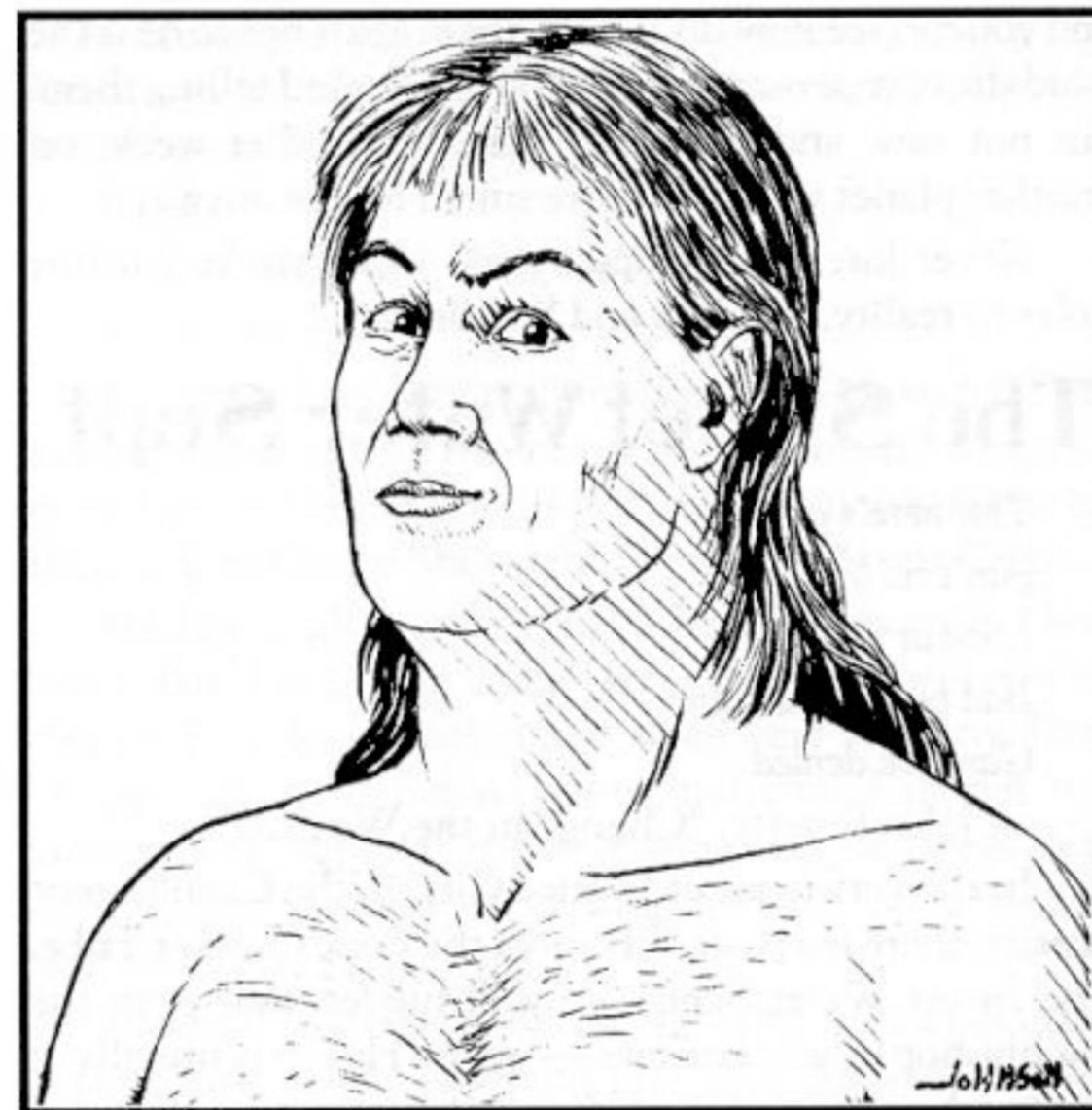
Backgrounds: Avatar 4, Library 5

Arete 9, Willpower 8, Quintessence 7, Paradox 0

Background: Have you ever seen the scream of mushroom near a dark sun in space? I have. Have you ever felt the songs of the cosmic seesaw teeter-tottering behind you with blood in their mouths and razors in their eyes? I have.

Image: It is possible that larger women exist in the realms of reality, but one would be hard pressed to prove it. It is possible that a more feral expression could be found somewhere on the planet, but not likely. On the bright side, she has lovely hair, and one of the nicest manicures around.

Roleplaying Notes: You are not a happy woman. Everything you ever knew to be real has been pulled away from you. Once you loved the world, and in return it stomped on you until you were broken and bloody in the gutter. Now you intend to return the favor. Whenever things get too calm, stir up some trouble. Never keep your word to anyone save other Marauders. If there is a choice between helping the Technocracy and helping the Traditions, help the Traditions, and when the battle is done, send them to the sun.



Pioebcock The Mighty

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Deviant

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Marauder

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 1, Expression 2, Intuition 1, Intimidation 5

Knowledges: Etiquette 2, Melee 3 Survival 5

Skills: Cosmology 3, Enigmas 5, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Spheres Entropy 3, Forces 5, Life 3, Mind 4, Matter 2, Prime 5, Spirit 3

Backgrounds: None today thank you. Well, okay, but only one. Avatar 5

Arete 5, Willpower 5, Quintessence 7, Paradox 0

Background: So after my shadow had been stolen by the evil metal king of Nasty Land, I stalked away in search of a new friend. I could not find one, but one found me. "Pioebok?" she said. And immediately I replied: "There is that chance, yes. But I shouldn't be too sure." "Well," she said, "If you do happen to see the Five Winged Quasipootuses, I would appreciate your delivering this granite flavored enema to him as soon as convincingly possible...."

Image: The man dresses in the Emperor's New Clothing. He does, however, ride a very nice white Unicorn. Pay no attention to the feathered serpent behind him, however; that always happens when he comes to this part of the world.

Roleplaying Notes: You know something they don't, and you can see how it's tearing them apart not to hear the words from your own mouth. You don't mind telling them, but not now and not here. Perhaps another week, on another planet would be more suited for tea anyway.

Never lose your temper; smile while you're blasting holes in reality, Sleepers and buildings.

The Sweet Water Sept

This here's a jungle

Ain't no lie

Look at the people

Bad business comin'

Can't be denied

— John Fogerty, "Change in the Weather"

In the very heart of Mexico City, in the Cuauhtemoc district, there is a powerful sept of the Bone Gnawer Tribe. The Sweet Water Sept is so well hidden that even the Archbishop Alicia Barrows — whose Haven is literally at the southwestern edge of their protectorate — does not realize that they exist. While the park is their main hangout and one of the few places where the Garou can be as one with Gaia in the entire city, there is no caern to be found.

The Bone Gnawers have joined forces with the Celestial Chorus and Dreamspeaker mages that still live in Mexico City in an attempt to survive the overwhelming corruption that lives and grows in the city. The Bone Gnawers spend their time slipping into and out of the Umbra, to battle the rampant Banes in order to steal the Gnosis needed to protect their city. There is no Bawn, there is no caern. Woe be to the foolish who cause grief in Alameda.

The Bone Gnawers are the only Garou, save for the Black Spiral Dancers, who have successfully managed to

continue living in the city. They are the only Garou who have not fallen to the Wyrm. The Sweet Water Sept can be found in Alameda, but also roam, trying to locate Ronin foolish enough to come to Mexico City. Someone has to save the careless from the Wyrm and the Sweet Water Sept is the only option available.

Many of the sept's ten members once belonged to other tribes, and have since joined the Bone Gnawers in their losing battle against the overwhelming odds. Make no mistake — the Bone Gnawers of Mexico City are warriors first and defenders second. There is no time for peace any longer, only for combat. The entire sept follows Quetzalcoatl as their totem, though this Quetzalcoatl is only another form of the Phoenix.



Father Machete, Sept Leader

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Bone Gnawers

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Curmudgeon

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 5, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urg 3, Subterfuge 5, Streetwise 5

Knowledges: Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Melee 5, Leadership 4, Performance 5, Repair 1, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Skills: Computer 3, Enigmas 5, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 2, Past Life 5, Contacts 5

Gifts: (1) Cooking, Create Element, Inspiration, The Falling Touch; (2) Blissful Ignorance, Burrow, Curse of Hatred, Spirit of the Fray; (3) Beg, Combat Healing, Eyes of the Cat; (4) Atunement, Clenched Jaw, Gift of the Porcupine; (5) Kiss of Helios Survivor, Totem Gift

Rank: 5

Rage 9, Gnosis 8, Willpower 8

Rites: Talisman Dedication, Rite of Contrition, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of the Fetish, Rite of Summoning, Rite of the Dead (See Appendix Two)

Fetishes: Machete (Level 4, Gnosis 6; the Machete in question grants 1 Rage point per turn, but only for the purpose of attacking with this Fetish. Whether he spends Rage points or not, Father Machete strikes at least twice per round while wielding this massive blade.)

Background: I was born in Mexico City and I expect to die here. I will not surrender my city to the Wyrm; if all others are too cowardly to fight for their beliefs, then they shall fall before the Leeches. We are losing the fight, and most of us are metis, but we will not surrender, and we will prevail. Gaia be with us, Luna protect us.

Image: Father Machete is a brute. He bears the signs of various conflicts with the Sabbat, and he wears them with pride. Machete stands almost 10 feet tall in Crinos, and is a lean 6'4" in Homid. His hare-lip makes him look like he is scowling all the time, a perfect disguise to hide the fact that he is, indeed, scowling all the time.

Roleplaying Notes: Never take flack off of anyone; this is a combat zone as bad as the Amazon, but most of the Garou have abandoned you in your time of need. You do not need their advice, and you do not need their remorse or embarrassment for having been born a metis. If they want to help, wonderful; if not, to hell with them all.



Sling Shot, Warden (such as it is)

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ragabash

Tribe: Bone Gnawers

Nature: Show Off

Demeanor: Jester

Physical: Strength 2 (4/6/5/4), Dexterity 5 (6/7/8/8), Stamina 4 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 1, Primal-Urge 3, Subterfuge 5

Knowledges: Drive 2, Firearms 5, Melee 3, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Repair 4, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Skills: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Contacts 5

Gifts: (1) Blur of the Milky Eye, Persuasion, Scent of Sweet Honey; (2) Jam Technology, Staredown, Taking the Forgotten; (3) Fly Feet, Gift of the Skunk, Silence; (4) Infest, Spirit Ward, Whelp Body

Rank: 4

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 10

Rites: None

Fetishes: Luna's Sling Shot (Level 3, Gnosis 6). This unusual fetish allows the bearer to fire missile weapons around corners with a Gnosis Roll, and to cause aggravated damage. (See Corner Shot in the Werewolf Players Guide.)

Background: I cannot tell a lie. I was born in New Jersey. But, I'm feeling much better now. I came down to Mexico City for vacation the same year that my First Change occurred. I don't quite understand it, but my parents never reported me as missing. Maybe it was that little problem with the car, the peanut butter, and the girl next door...

Image: Sling Shot is decidedly short, with a pot belly from too much tequila and a grin that denies his usual hangover. His fur is jet black, and a few have hypothesized that his actual tribe is the Black Furies.

Roleplaying Notes: "Hey, what the problem is with most of the world is that they've forgotten how to laugh." You have made it your goal in life to make people laugh, even if they are your enemies. Then, while they are laughing, drop them like flies at a poisoned picnic.



Mother Baggy Pants, Master of the Rite

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Bone Gnawers

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Reluctant Garou

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5),
Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 4, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Primal-Urges 4, Subterfuge 5, Streetwise 5

Knowledges: Drive 3, Firearms 3, Melee 4, Leadership 3, Performance 4, Repair 4, Stealth 1, Survival 5

Skills: Computer 1, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 4

Gifts: (1) Cooking, Sense Wyrm, Truth Of Gaia; (2) Call to Duty, Strength of Purpose, Trash Magnet; (3) Awaken Beast, Gift of the Termite, Reshape Object

Rank: 3

Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Willpower 6

Rites: All

Fetishes: Dream Trap, Stone Bag (See Werewolf Player's Guide) (Level 4, Gnosis 5; This battered leather bag has several pockets on the sides. The Stone Bag is not only capable of storing Gnosis, as per the Gnostic Bag, but also packs a mean wallop. The bag itself weighs only as much as a leather bag should, as far as the bearer is concerned, but to anyone attempting to take the bag by

force, the weight increases by several thousand pounds. The bag causes 4 extra dice of non-aggravated damage when used as a weapon. Muggers beware.)

Background: I was not born here; I was born in California. Back home they even treated me like a human; my name was Sarah. My parents had trouble with my malformity, and sent me to live with an aunt of mine in Mexico City for the summer when I was 12. That was 15 years ago. They have yet to collect me, and I have learned not to care. At least among the Sweet Water Sept, I am of some use.

Image: Baggy Pants is a thin girl; she looks barely 14 years of age. Currently at that "awkward" stage in her life where she appears to be all knees and elbows, Baggy Pants has been at that stage for over 17 years. Baggy pants is quite attractive, save for the third eye that moves blindly on her forehead. Her hair is black, and all three eyes are brown.

Roleplaying Notes: You accept that you are metis, you accept that you are Garou, but you prefer that people think of you first as a person. While you almost never speak of these problems, you have learned to hate the outsiders who come and gawk at your unfortunate third eye. More than anything, you want to be thought of as an equal instead of a monster.

Wanderer, Keeper of the Land

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Unknown

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5),
Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 3 (2/0/3/3)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3



Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 3, Subterfuge 1

Knowledges: Drive 3, Etiquette 3, Firearms 5, Melee 3, Leadership 3, Performance 4, Repair 5, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Skills: Computer 2, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 1

Backgrounds: None

Gifts: (1) Cooking

Rank: 1

Rage 8, Gnosis 4, Willpower 7

Rites: None

Fetishes: 17 vials of Clear Water (See Werewolf Player's Guide)

Background: My name is Mary Taylor. My father's name was Robert. May Gaia forgive me, I am a Skin-Dancer.

Image: Wanderer is a handsome woman. She carries herself with quiet dignity and a grace that is almost magical. She has only spoken once, and that was simply to say that she meant no harm. Baggy Pants and Sling Shot each took turns caring for her, and after many hours of trying, managed to teach Wanderer the Gift Cooking. Wanderer has a haunted look in her eyes at all times, and often appears on the verge of tears.

Roleplaying Notes: You will fight if provoked, but for the most part you keep to yourself, holding your arms across your chest in an attempt to stop the chills that wrack your soul.

Notes: Wanderer shivers inside because of the pain she suffered when she first attempted to step into the Umbra and was forced into Erebus by a Wyldling. She has been in a state of Harano ever since.

Razorface

Breed: Lopus

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Adopted Bone Gnawer

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 2 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 0 (0/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urge 5, Subterfuge 2

Knowledges: Melee 3, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Skills: Computer 4, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3

Backgrounds: Past Life 4

Gifts: (1) Control Simple Machine, Find Water, Razor Claws; (2) Cybersenses, Scent of Sight, Power



Surge; (3) Control Complex Machine, Data Flow, Elemental Favor; (4) Attunement, Clenched Jaw, Gnaw

Rank: 1

Rage 9, Gnosis 8, Willpower 7

Rites: None

Fetishes: Geomid Fragment, Loon's Refund, Lightning Claws, Phreak Box, Surge of False Energy, Steel Fur, Vulcan's Interface

Background: I never dreamed that they would do this to me; I never suspected that my own tribe could betray me in this way. I was loyal, always ready to defend the caern. I think that they weren't sure what to do with me, as I was not born Homid or even metis. Stay away from the Cyber-Realms unless you are ready for them... Great Gaia, I was only a pup. I had not even attended my Rite of Passage.

Image: Razor Face lives up to his name in all possible ways. His teeth are stainless steel and razor edged. In all of his forms his fur glints metallically, and his claws are a menacing sight. Razor Face is a Cyber-Wolf (see *Umbra: The Velvet Shadow*).

Roleplaying Notes: You absolutely loathe humans, but you know that killing them without provocation is wrong... at least in the eyes of your sept members. You love to spend time with the computers, and frankly, you get along pretty damned well with the Technocracy... except in Mexico City. You mistakenly believe that your tribe abandoned you. In truth you got lost in the Umbra after trying to teach yourself too much too soon.

Mexico Kindred

*Our little group has always been
And always will until the end
With the lights out
It's less dangerous
Here we are now
Entertain us*

— Nirvana, "Smells Like Teen Spirit"

There are more than 200 Kindred in Mexico City. Most of the vampires in Mexico City are Sabbat, and those that are not with the Sabbat are only safe so long as they can successfully hide that knowledge from the others. It is one of ironies of the World of Darkness that in Mexico, stronghold of *machismo*, the vampiric power structure is largely female. Some feel there is a sort of justice in this.

The rules are not as stringent in Mexico City as they are in most parts of the United States. The only cares the local Kindred share are the worries that affect all vampires. Most of the Sabbat are allowed to come and go as they please in Mexico, but they are watched carefully. The first dozen or so Kindred they run across are likely to attempt several communications with them. If they do not respond properly, the Black Hand will want to know why.

Despite the amount of freedom given to visitors and local vampires alike, there is a strong sense of imminent danger looming over the heads of most Kindred in town. No one caught breaking the rules goes unpunished. There is too much fear of Camarilla spies and mad mages. This fear is justified...

Cardinal Melinda Galbraith

Sire: Helene

Nature: Director

Demeanor: Judge

Clan: Toreador Antitribu

Generation: 5th

Embrace: 1143

Apparent Age: 30

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 8, Manipulation 8, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 7, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Diplomacy 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 4, Intrigue 5, Sense Deception 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Debate 5, Etiquette 4, Firearms 5, Firewalking 4, Melee 3, Survival 5

Knowledges: Area Knowledge 5 (Mexico City) Bureaucracy 5, Computer 4, Finance 5, Politics 5, Sabbat Lore 5, Camarilla Lore 4, Medicine 5, Occult 3

Virtues: Callousness 5, Instincts 5, Morale 5

Disciplines: Auspex 8, Celerity 5, Dominate 8, Fortitude 6, Obtenebration 5, Presence 6, Potence 7, Vicissitude 6



Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Herd 5, Influence 5, Resources 5, Retainers 3, Status 5

Haven: Several penthouses around the city.

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 7

Willpower: 9

Background: I was born in Spain, and forced to leave Europe behind when I was captured by Helena. I was treated well enough, but was a slave. I swore that this would never happen again; that is a promise I have both kept and broken. When I was Embraced, my Sire forced me into a Blood-Bond. She assured me that the Bond was for my own good, and that I had nothing to fear from her. She betrayed me, left me to rot in this festering wound of a town. I have never forgiven her.

I came to Mexico with my Sire and the Conquistadors. I fought along side Helena as she helped make Cortes' conquest of the Aztecs a reality. The battles were savage. The mages that fought us were many, but none could hope to resist Helena's power. Then she left me — walked away without a single backwards glance. And then the Sabbat came, and I joined them eagerly. Anything to break the power of the Blood-Bond that held me in Helena's thrall.

It is not easy being the cardinal of a city, let alone one the size of Mexico. I was groomed from a young age to be a fighter, and to hold dearly what is mine. Helena was a wise human, and a wiser Kindred. From my Embrace to the present day, I still feel great affection for her, even past my hatred for what she did to me. But I have found a new advisor, Huitzilopochtli. He called to me and I responded. Now he advises me and makes certain that I rule wisely. He sleeps, deep beneath the city. Still he hears my questions and advises me. I am his Thrall, he is my Regnant, but our goals are the same. I will not disappoint him.

Image: Melinda is a stunning woman, but those with Auspex can still see a few scars left from the plague that she never covered as well as she should have. She has dark brown

hair and light hazel eyes, and she is always dressed impeccably in the finest clothes that money can buy.

Roleplaying Notes: You didn't get to be the Cardinal of Mexico City as a result of your looks. You made your way to the top the old fashioned way; you tore your enemies apart. Never show mercy, unless the kindness can be repaid tenfold. Never be lenient, unless the result is increased loyalty. Never suffer a Camarilla spy to live, unless the end result is a Sabbat spy to send back. Never show weakness. No exceptions. There are rumors going around that Helena has been spotted in the city. You are very worried about this possibility.

Influence: Everyone shows deference to the Cardinal. The deference may be a lie, but everyone has become very good at lying.

Notes: Melinda is under the belief that Helena betrayed her. Her mind is slowly being twisted by Huitzilopochtli, and he is preparing to make her believe he is her Sire and lover.

Joe "Boot" Hill

Sire: Bernard del Gado

Clan: Assamite Antitribu

Nature: Cavalier

Demeanor: Gallant

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1881

Apparent Age: 27

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Blind Fighting 3, Drive 2, Firearms 5, Firewalking 4, Melee 5, Music 2 (Harmonica),



Security 4, Stealth 5, Snake Charming 4, Survival 3, Torture 5

Knowledges: Black Hand Knowledge 5, Bureaucracy 2, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 3, Politics 2, Sabbat Lore 3

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 3, Morale 3

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Potence 4, Fortitude 5, Quietus 6, Viscissitude 2

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Black Hand Membership 3, Contacts 3, Resources 5, Retainers 4

Haven: Never far from his horses' stables.

Path of Enlightenment: Power and the Inner Voice 7

Willpower: 8

Background: Let me tell you somethin': there's rules to follow, even if most of the fools living here don't know what they are. I enforce those rules, and that's what got me here in the first place.

There was a time when I took the crap that people dealt out to me and I smiled, tipped my hat and went on my way. Those times are long gone. When I met Bernard, he was talkin' a line a crap about fifteen miles longer'n it needed to be, and I just wasn't in the mood to listen. So I shot him. Then he got up and reminded me that shootin' an unarmed man is downright rude where he's from. Well, never to be outdone, I shot him again. Then I proceeded to mop up the floor with his head.

He took it poorly. Bernard del Gado dragged me behind his horse for about half a mile before he decided to accept my apology. 'Course by that time I'd lost most of my teeth and a good portion of my nose. He kept me goin' by feedin' me some of his blood, and he kept me in line by reminding me that he could track me anywhere I wanted to go. I realize now how nice he was bein', I've seen what he does to people he don't like. He waited til I was properly mended, then he bit me an' buried me. I came out of the ground about three days later madder'n a hornets' nest that just got pissed on, and whupped the snot out of three of his friends when they tried to restrain me. Then Bernard taught me what fighting was all about.

I still miss him sometimes, but he should have known better than to rassle a Lupine without a gun. They run in packs, and he was only just startin' to feed on the first one when the rest of them cowardly varmints caught him in the act.

Image: Joe Hill is a tall, lean gunslinger. His clothes are always clean, and his hat is black. Joe's face still bears the scars from his little incident — being dragged across the ground behind a horse — in some cases these scars are little more than something left after shaving too closely, but in a few cases, the deep wounds never healed properly, and thick lumps of flesh have covered his once handsome face. From any distance greater than a few feet, however, Joe is still a handsome man. He traded in his six shooters for two Ingram Mac 10s and a Fiachi Law-12, but he still prefers to call his opponents out when the situation permits. Joe follows the code of the old west, right down to keeping his well-trained horse retainer around. He earned the nickname "Boot" Hill as a result of what he does to Kindred who just won't listen to reason.

Roleplaying Notes: If'n they're askin' fer a fight, whup the snot out of 'em. If'n it's a woman doing the asking, apologize, and then whup the snot out of her. Yer the best damn tracker this side of the border, and you never forget when someone's done somethin' they shouldn't have. You especially like huntin' down Lupines, 'cause you like watchin' them burn when you fill 'em with silver shot.

Influence: Joe Hill is the Dominion of the Black Hand in Mexico City, and despite his attitude and Texan accent, he is more than capable of tearing the heart out of anyone who gives him grief. Joe is very loyal to the Sabbat, and expects the same from his associates; anyone who does not meet up with Joe's stringent requirements is "invited to leave" until he can meet all of the prerequisites. Joe does not believe in killing Kindred unnecessarily, but he will. Joe fought his way to the top of the Black Hand, taking several opponents down a few notches in the process. Everyone in Mexico knows Joe, and no one ever gives him lip.

Jorge De La Muerte

Sire: The Baron

Clan: Samedi

Nature: Judge

Demeanor: Confidant

Generation: 7th

Embrace: 1732

Apparent Age: 200, give or take.

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 6

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 3, Body Alteration 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5



Skills: Firearms 4, Melee 4, Security 3, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 4, Finance 3, Investigation 4, Law 3, Linguistics 5, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Politics 2, Sabbat Lore 5, Camarilla Lore 5, Science 4, Torture 5

Virtues: Conscience 3, Self-Control 4, Courage 5

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 5, Fortitude 5, Necromancy 3, Obfuscate 6, Presence 4, Potence 2, Serpentis 3, Thanatos 5

Backgrounds: Resources 2, Contacts 3, Allies 3

Haven: The sewers.

Humanity: 1

Willpower: 10

Background: The thrice damned fools. They are so certain that no one could possibly infiltrate the Sabbat. Well, they are sadly mistaken. When I ran across the small nest of these vipers trying to infest my beloved Port Au Prince, I decided that the time had come to do something about the vermin. After several weeks of torture, they surrendered all that they knew. I learn more with every passing day, and as long as I go along with the wishes of these vermin while I stay in Mexico City, there will be no problems with continuing my education. The time is coming when the Sabbat will learn the error of their ways. Just as the Camarilla will learn the same lessons. My infiltration is complete. The audacity of joining the Black Hand! It takes courage to learn anything; it takes a sharp mind to use that knowledge. The spirits of the dead cry out to me — they scream of their suffering at the hands of the Sabbat. The time is coming for them to have their vengeance!

Image: The Mummy lives! De La Muerte is a shrivelled stick of a man. His skin flakes and peels away constantly, and his eyes are sunken deep into the back of his head. His attire normally includes sandals, black pants and a doctor's lab coat. He is never seen without his doctor's bag full of autopsy equipment.

Roleplaying Notes: Never disagree with your superiors. You are living on borrowed time; you have to find out all that you can, and return the information gleaned to the leader of your Bloodline. If it were possible to Blood Bind you, you would have already given in to these vile beasts.

Influence: Jorge is a Remover of the Black Hand, answerable only to his superiors. He is also a master of torture, and has let this information leak to all of the right Kindred. Jorge is as feared as any Kindred in Mexico City, but he is also smart enough not to use that fear to his own advantage unless it is absolutely necessary. He already has four of his Childer in the city, and they are busily mapping out the areas of hottest political interest.



Priscus Valenko Dmiritav

Sire: Laanto Dormotji

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Loner

Clan: Tzimisce

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1476

Apparent Age: 24

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 7, Intelligence 7, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 5, Interrogation 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Body Alteration 5, Drive 2, Fire Eating 4, Firearms 3, Melee 5, Repair 3, Survival 3, Torture 2

Knowledges: Alchemy 4, Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 5 Bureaucracy 4, Computer 2, Finance 2, Investigation 4, Law 4, Occult 5, Sabbat Lore 4, Camarilla Lore 3, Politics 4

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 2, Morale 5

Disciplines: Animalism 5, Auspex 5, Celerity 3, Mytherceria 5, Protean 5, Thaumaturgy 6 (Path of Blood 5, Weather Control 3, Path of Conjuring 4) Vicissitude 7

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Occult Library 5, Resources 5, Retainers 2

Haven: An abandoned warehouse in the worst part of town.

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Honorable Accord 7

Willpower: 8

Background: There are lessons to be learned from every experience. Take it from someone who knows: never turn your back on a Tzimisce. I had come to an agreement with Laanto

Dormotji; I would aid him in his research for protection from the sun's rays, and he would explain the lifestyle of the Kindred. I kept my part of the bargain. Laanto could walk in the noonday sun for several hours at a time, but he would have to return to me for replenishment of his supplies. In order to ensure that I continue to supply him, he Embraced me.

He should have made certain that he grabbed the proper jar of ointment. I loved the sounds of his screams as he roasted in the sun's rays the next day. The Kindred are too powerful already, and too dangerous. I burned my notes on the formula. Naturally, I kept my supply; I'm not foolish.

Image: Valenko Dmiritav is a thin man in his late fifties, with long silvery hair and a heavy mustache. His hawkish nose and bristling eyebrows hide eyes that have seen too much evil. He is always grim; no one recalls ever seeing him smile.

Roleplaying Notes: No one realizes the truth. You were a mage, and had plans for helping the world. Now you are forced into this hellish existence as a Kindred. You watch everyone, and you help the leaders of the Kindred, but as soon as you can, you will return to your Progenitor brethren and be cured of this vile disease. The only thing that has stopped you so far is fear; you remember all too well what sorts of experiments your fellow Progenitors were known to perform on the undead.

Influence: As Priscus, you are answerable only to the Archbishops and the Cardinal. You are their advisor, and do your best to direct them away from the foul pit that is engulfing all of Mexico City.

Archbishop Alicia Barrows

Sire: Andre Milano

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Deviant

Clan: Malkavian Antitribu

Generation: 6th



Embrace: 1401

Apparent Age: 18

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Talents: Acting 5, Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Empathy 5, Fortune Telling 5, Intimidation 3, Leadership 5, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Blind Fighting 3, Body Alteration 2, Drive 5, Firearms 3, Melee 5, Music 4, Repair 4, Sabbat Lore 5, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 5, Computer 4, Finance 4, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 5, Medicine 3, Politics 5

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 4, Morale 5

Disciplines: Auspex 7, Celerity 4, Dementation 7, Fortitude 4, Presence 5, Potence 7, Obfuscate 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 3, Resources 5, Retainers 5

Haven: Palacio de Minería

Path of Enlightenment: It changes from night to night. 4

Willpower: 10

Background: They're coming, you know. Nothing we can do will stop them. I read of their rising in my cards, before I was even Embraced. There will be no escape from the Gehenna. The Antediluvians will rise, and they will devour us all. When I told my Sire of his fate, to die at the hands of Malkav, he forced the Embrace on me and told me that at least he would not die alone. He was wrong. I made certain that he was alone when he died.

It took me a long time to try reading my cards again. But eventually the urge was too strong to resist. The fates had changed. I know now that it is possible to stop the Gehenna from arriving. The only question is how...

Image: Alicia is pale and lovely. Her hair is dark red, and her eyes are green. She stands only 4'10" in height, but carries herself as if she were much taller. She is often mistaken for a stray child when she is first seen. Only after a second glance can a person see the full figure she hides beneath shapeless dresses.

Roleplaying Notes: You know that salvation is possible. You have confidence that salvation will be achieved. You must convince all of the Sabbat to band together and to work as one to find and destroy the Antediluvians.

Influence: Alicia is one of the Archbishops for the Sabbat in Mexico City, and as such has a substantial amount of influence over the unives of those around her. She is smart enough not to flaunt her power, and is probably alive as a result of the precautions she takes, and her use of others to actually give the orders.



Paladin Rosa Martinez

Sire: Melinda Galbraith

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Conformist

Clan: Toreador Antitribu

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1880

Apparent Age: 28

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 7, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 7

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Intrigue 4, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 4, Firearms 5, Interrogation 3, Melee 4, Music 3, Security 5, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 3 (Underbelly) 3, Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, Politics 4

Virtues: Callousness 5, Instincts 4, Morale 5

Disciplines: Auspex 4, Celerity 4, Fortitude 6, Obtenebration 4, Presence 4, Potence 5

Backgrounds: Resources 4, Contacts 3, Allies 5

Haven: Wherever Melinda is staying.

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 4

Willpower: 7

Background: Melinda has always been good to me. She took me in when I was just a child and she had me trained in the ways of a warrior. I never had to fear being alone with Melinda near by. I never had to worry about money or a roof over my head. I would surely have died if not for her. I owe her, and will protect her, even after having met the Master. He understands how I feel, and he forgives this foolish loyalty.

I hope that Melinda will come around soon to the Master's ways. She is too valuable to lose. I feel that with Melinda by his side, the Master can truly achieve anything.

Image: Rosa is a very tall woman, 6'4", and very muscular from her years as her Sire's Retainer. Her hair is sandy blond and her eyes are blue. The most noticeable feature about Rosa is the clothing she wears — a man's suit and overcoat to hide the arsenal of weapons on her body.

Roleplaying Notes: Don't speak unless spoken to. Always keep your answers direct and to the point. Never volunteer information; that's how you got this job in the first place. Your predecessor talked too much and you were willing to listen and report to Melinda.

Influence: Rosa terrifies most everyone, but her influence extends only as far as her reach.



Lisandro Giovanni

Sire: Andreas Giovanni

Nature: Conniver

Demeanor: Conformist

Generation: 6th (Posing as a Ventre Antitribu)

Embrace: 1721

Apparent Age: 34

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 7, Intelligence 5, Wits 6

Talents: Alertness 5, Body Alteration 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 5, Leadership 4, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Security 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 2, Finance 5, Investigation 3, Law 3, Linguistics 5, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Politics 5 Sabbat Lore 3, Camarilla Lore 3, Science 4, Torture 5

Merits: Conscience 1, Self-Control 5, Courage 3

Disciplines: Dominate 5, Fortitude 3, Necromancy 5, Potence 3, Thanatosis 3, Thaumaturgy 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Sabbat Status 3, Resources 5 Retainers 4

Haven: Penthouse apartment in the new part of the city.

Humanity: 4

Willpower: 6

Background: Hey, believe me, when your Sire says to go look into the NAFTA situation, you look into the NAFTA situation. So he told me it would be good for the family, and so I listened. Here I am. But I'm better armed than most; it's amazing what a dead Kindred can tell you if you know how to ask...little secrets, like all the right codes and gestures that let you slip past any of them stupid hand signals the Sabbat use, y'know what I mean?

So I've only been here a few weeks when my zombies start acting up. Imagine my surprise when I find out that they're actually my old friends in the Samedi. I hadn't seen them since they did Baby Doc in Haiti — Jeez, that was a mess for you. So they want a little information, and I need a little help with my research. So far it's working just fine.

Image: Lisandro is a handsome man, give or take the pockmarks on his face. Perfectly cut clothes are the only kind that touch his form. His hair is always perfect.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a cold bastard, but mostly because you are terrified of being caught. There's too much at risk for the family if you blow this task.

Influence: Lisandro and the Samedi have formed a powerful friendship out of mutual need. Between them, they have discovered a great deal about what is really going on in Mexico City. Both groups are planning major infiltration attacks, and the time is almost ripe.

Delilah Monroe

Sire: Angela Preston

Nature: Bon Vivant

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Generation: 10th

Clan: Daughters of Cacophony Antitribu

Embrace: 1981

Apparent Age: 19

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 3, Alertness 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Leadership 2

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Music 3, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Linguistics 1, Politics 1

Virtues: Callousness 4, Instincts 2, Morale 3



Disciplines: Auspex 1, Fortitude 2, Presence 3, Melpominee 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Contacts 5, Fame 3, Resources 5

Haven: The Underbelly, or if she really feels like slumming, with a few of her pack mates

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 2

Willpower: 3

Background: So like, I was gonna be in a band. Okay? And there was this group of rilly cool guys that were gonna play back-up for me. And they even did for a while, until we had engine troubles and went down in San Diego. Well, there was this other group of losers that decided I could be worth some money, on account of the contract I had just signed. So they like took me hostage an' stuff. Only, these really fat women in Viking costumes came and killed them and then took me away from the leftovers, and then they made me a vampire.

Only, they didn't really ask if I wanted to be a vampire; I mean, how am I supposed to work on my tan now? Under the full moon? I'm sure! So, I made the best of what I had and started doin' recordings an' stuff only at night. An' then I got into this really cool stuff about devil worship, made some major bucks off the dorks that are into that kinda crap, y'know?

And then we went on this world tour, and I made sure that we only flew at night. Then the plane got fucked up and I ended up in Mexico City. An' that's how I met all my new friends. Is that bitchin' or what?

Image: Delilah is a vision of angelic beauty, until you add the spiked hair, the safety pins in her cheeks, ears and eyebrows, and the exceedingly vulgar language that spews from her mouth.

Roleplaying Notes: They are all so bo-oring! You thought that the Sabbat would be a blast, but they're just as bad as those Camarilla geeks. Maybe the Anarchs would be more fun...

Influence: Delilah is planning to start a little crusade against the Sabbat. She's already been up to Los Angeles and Seattle, gathering forces that would be interested in increasing the size of the Anarch Freestates. She's learned a few tactics from the Sabbat, however, including the idea of using available humans as cannon fodder after Embracing them. She's got them all on one level, because she intends to Blood-Bond any new ones she makes first.



Mad Mary

Sire: Heckler

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Deviant

Generation: 12th

Clan: Malkavian Antitribu

Embrace: 1963

Apparent Age: 24

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 4

Skills: Drive 2, Firewalking 4, Melee 4, Repair 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Medicine 3, Occult 1, Sabbat Lore 3

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 4, Morale 3

Disciplines: Auspex 2, Dementation 4, Protean 3

Backgrounds: Resources 1, Allies 1

Haven: Sewers

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Cathari 6

Willpower 6

Background: I was just walking down the streets in New York. This man came up to me, teetering like he was really drunk, and then he pinned me to the wall before I could even scream. He kissed me and he hugged me, and he pulled out a hank of his own hair. Then he said I reminded him of his mother, and he Embraced me. What the hell, I wasn't really doing anything anyway.

Image: Mary wears very little clothing and carries a big chainsaw. She's fairly attractive once you get past the blood stains.

Roleplaying Notes: Chop that baby up! But always ask permission first. The answer doesn't really matter much; you just let the old saw rip away.

Influence: Mary's started hanging around with Delilah lately, and she too is interested in the idea of creating a new Anarch Freestate. She's grown very tired of being told what she can and cannot do.

Wraiths

*And the devil in a black dress watches over
My guardian angel walks away
Life is short and love is always over in the morning
Black wind come carry me far away*

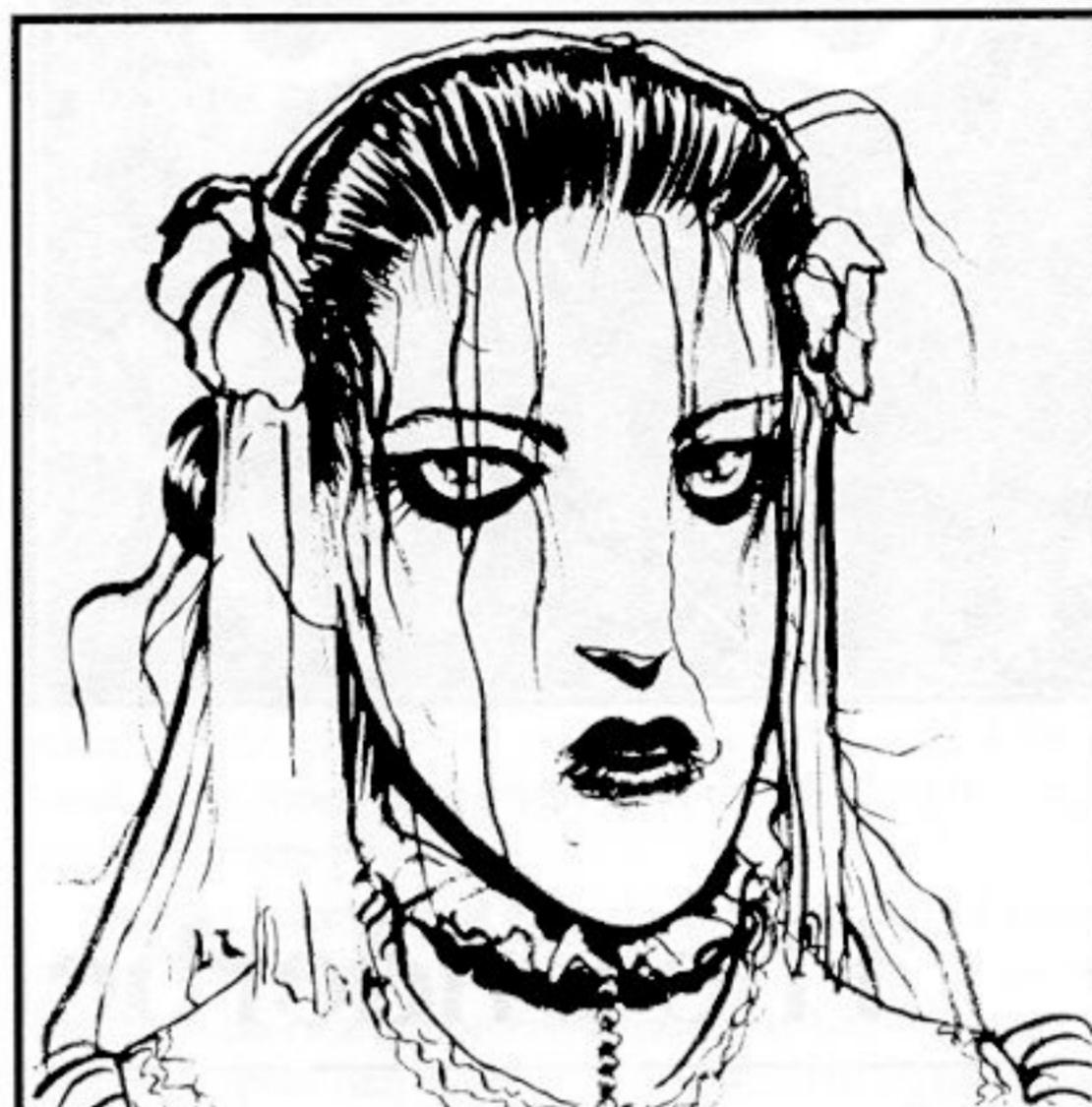
— Sisters of Mercy, "Temple of Love"

Mexico City's long, violent history has led to the creation of an enormous stronghold for wraiths. Within the stronghold are several Citadels, the most powerful of which rests atop the remains of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. The pyramids of Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl have both generated immense reserves of Angst, and that power is continuously fueled by the suffering of the living in Mexico City.

Most Mexican wraiths only wish to protect their families and gain vengeance against the powers that caused their deaths. During the Days of the Dead, the Shroud between the living and dead grows weaker, pushed back by the beliefs of the living. The wraiths have an easier time moving about and attempting to take care of their personal goals. However, also during the Days of the Dead, on the fifth day to be precise, the Garou perform the Rites of the Dead, strengthening the barrier between worlds and pushing out the Restless Dead for a while. The Garou believe they are doing the wraiths a favor. They are wrong.

The wraiths' Shadowland is menacing here, making the living Mexico City seem almost tranquil. The ancient ruins of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco are still real here, literally merged with the modern day buildings of Mexico City. The streets are heaped with refuse, and the waters of Tetzcoco are filled with the blood of countless sacrifices. The wraiths of Mexico City are not happy. But the ghosts in the Underbelly of the Wyrm are all too pleased; they thrive in the misery that they have created.

The Storyteller is encouraged to use wraiths in conjunction with "The Chaos Factor". Several suggestions are given throughout the story, primarily as added spice. If the players opt to play a ghost, they should be allowed to do so, provided the Storyteller is familiar with the Wraith rules. Some guidelines for representing wraith Arcanos are given in Appendix Two.



Louisa de la Simon

Demeanor: Penitent

Nature: Deviant

Haunt: Underbelly of the Wyrm

Background: Arturo could not accept that I was not a virgin when we married. He could not accept that I had sold my body to buy food for my family. When he discovered the truth on our wedding night, he strangled me. I will find him, and return the favor, but first I will destroy everything he ever loved.

Image: Louisa was beautiful in life, and remains so in death. She has long dark hair and large dark eyes. Her lips are full and crimson, her body lean and elegant. She is normally seen in a flowing white wedding gown.

Roleplaying Notes: You are quiet and seductive. Smile at the men you meet, promising favors with your eyes. The women you treat civilly, but only because they are no longer competition. Your primary desire in this world is to woo men and then lead them to their deaths. Many homeless Mexicans have died because they followed you into the Wyrm's Underbelly.

Notes: Louisa's powers include walking through walls, possession, and fear. Consider her Rank Three if she contests another supernatural's powers (see Appendix Two for details).



Mictlan, the Black Shadow

Demeanor: Deviant

Nature: Bravo

Haunt: Tlatelolco

Background: I'll tell you one secret, no more, no less. I could leave here anytime I want to. I simply choose to stay. I followed the true Mictlantecuhtli in life, I impersonate him in death. The living are such easy prey....

Image: A black cloud that broods in the sky, oozing down to do violence and often laughing as it approaches.

Roleplaying Notes: Your primary goal is to kill the living and force their souls onward to Oblivion. Nothing else matters. However, if you can make them suffer as they go, you are that much happier. You lead the wraiths that worship death in their quest to destroy everything living, and in Mexico City you are almost akin to a god.

Notes: Mictlan can use all of the powers listed in Appendix Two, and can manifest as a huge black cloud as well. Consider him Rank Five.

The Underbelly of the Wyrm



A few representative members of this dark collective appear below. Some are important Sepulchre leaders while others are simply given here for color and atmosphere.

Nephandi

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

— Matthew 7:15

Amelio Santa Lucien

Nature: Architect (Sepulchre Member)

Demeanor: Deviant

Essence: Primordial

Tradition: Nephandi

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Awareness 4, Expression 4, Intuition 5, Intimidation 5

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 5, Leadership 5, Meditation 5, Research 5, Survival 4

Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 5, Occult 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 5, Forces 4, Life 5, Mind 3, Matter 5, Prime 5, Spirit 2, Time 4

Backgrounds: Resources 5, Library 3, Destiny 4, Influence 5, Avatar 5, Node 5

Arete 7, Willpower 8, Quintessence 13, Paradox 7

Talisman: The Virgin's Tear is a sacrificial dagger with a four foot long blade. This dagger has been enchanted to allow Amelio to return to the Caul of the Pandemonium from anywhere, particularly if he has been heavily injured.



While the dagger is still used regularly for sacrifices, Amelio is never without the weapon in a sheath at his hip.

Background: Well, we all have our secrets, don't we? I will tell you this much — I remember Christ's crucifixion fondly.

Image: Amelio has a seemingly perfect body and a serenely handsome face. All of the physical changes brought about by his frequent visits to the Caul are well hidden. Every inch of Amelio's body normally kept clothed is covered in tattoos. The images vary from copulation with oddly shaped demons to detailed scenes from ritualistic sacrifices. The tattoos on the inside of his skin are even worse, bearing the names and images of over 700 demons. His eyes are cold blue, and his hair is as dark as the sins he is guilty of committing.

Roleplaying Notes: You are a charmer, sly and friendly. You never talk badly about anyone, you just think poorly of them. There is one exception; you never hesitate to tell everyone just how horrible the Camarilla is. After all, when in Rome...

Never argue with your fellow members of the Sepulchre; the wisest person is the one who holds his tongue. When you are not directly speaking to another person, allow a small smile to twist one side of your face. You often reflect on the things you have done in the past and remember them fondly.

Jannesha Torrensi

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Avant-Garde

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Cult of Ecstasy Barabbi

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5



Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Expression 3, Intuition 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Meditation 3, Research 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Cosmology 3, Culture 5, Enigmas 3, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Science 4

Spheres: Entropy 4, Forces 2, Life 4, Mind 3, Prime 3, Time 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Chantry 5, Mentor 3, Avatar 3, Library 4

Arete: 4, **Willpower:** 6, **Quintessence:** 12, **Paradox:** 4

Background: I have always been a creature of sensual needs. My first true experience came when I was only 11 and my brother and his friends had their way with me. I cried with shame, but I enjoyed it too. Later, they cried in pain; one nail for each of them and a hammer was all it took. I Awakened later the same year, and I was told I was something of a prodigy. I joined the Cult of Ecstasy and stayed with them for over a decade, but soon found that nothing they could offer me satisfied my needs. I have found many interesting lovers with the Nephandi — human and otherwise.

Image: Jannesha is a lovely girl, a picture of innocence. She normally dresses like she's ready to go to parochial school any moment. Strawberry blond hair and a pretty little pout help emphasize the little girl features that she has acquired. Most believe the way she dresses is just another aspect of her decidedly kinky nature.

Roleplaying Notes: Always leave them wanting you in every sense of the word. Every gesture and word should be a subtle proposition, emphasis on subtle. Never offer information; it should be purchased. Whenever possible, you like to visit the surface and seduce others among the Awakened into joining the ranks of the Nephandi.

Mister Black, Mister Darke, Mister Night, Mister White and Mister Gray

Nature: Fanatic

Demeanor: Fanatic

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Men in Black Barabbi

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 5, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 3, Firearms 4, Meditation 3, Melee 5, Research 5, Survival 5, Stealth 5, Technology 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Investigation 3, Medicine 3, Science 5

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 3, Matter 3, Prime 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Avatar 4, Mentor 2

Arete 4, Willpower 7, Quintessence Varies, Paradox Varies

Background: We served, we were captured, we were transformed. We are not what the Technocracy made us be. We have been Reborn, given minds of our own and free will by the Pandemonium. We have seen the error of our ways. We are very grateful. If you harm the Pandemonium, you will die. Hail our mother, the Pandemonium. Hail our father, great Shaitan.

Image: Men in Black, only more menacing. The only distinctive feature that separates each of these entities is the change in the clothing they wear — from black, to dark grey to white.

Roleplaying Notes: Never speak unless spoken to. Watch everyone and everything and prepare to destroy anyone who would dare harm the Pandemonium. The Caul has reshaped you in its own image, as it realized that those who used it did not necessarily have its best intentions in mind. You will assist the Nephandi and the others only if the Pandemonium demands that you do so. You do not fear death; your pattern has become a part of the Pandemonium, and you are born again if you are destroyed. Speak to others in a threatening monotone.

Note: The Men in Black that have been Reborn in the Caul are limitless. The Pandemonium has developed a mind of its own and will use Quintessence to ensure that the Men In Black are always ready to serve, whether that means rebuilding them or rebirthing them. These Men in Black can be annihilated and return only seconds later. They all carry automatic weapons. Amelio and the rest of the Nephandi believe that the Men in Black serve them. They are sadly mistaken.



Sikes

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Deviant

Essence: Pattern

Tradition: Nephandi

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Expression 3, Intuition 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Etiquette 2, Meditation 3, Research 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Culture 2, Enigmas 5, Medicine 4, Occult 2

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 3, Life 2, Prime 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Avatar 2, Library 2

Arete 3, Willpower 8, Quintessence 12, Paradox 8

Background: I never thought this stuff was real until I met Amelio. I mean, I was doing all sorts of rituals and such, but I never saw anything happen. That's 'cause I didn't know how to look. It's not a game, man, this stuff is real! It's great, whatever I want, I can have, just by sayin' hocus pocus, as it were. Man, I bet my parents would really be worried about me if I hadn't sacrificed them, hunh?

Image: Long greasy hair, pimples, and clothes that reflect your belief that Satan Rules. A leather jacket adorned with too many spikes and chains, and the build of a fifteen year old boy.

Roleplaying Notes: You're a novice who thinks too much of yourself. You're cocky and stupid. Anyone looks at you cross-eyed, and you're likely to zap them with a lightning bolt. Amelio figures you have about another year of usefulness before you get yourself killed. Never hesitate to blast your enemies with a good jolt of hellfire.



Black Spiral Dancers

Blast of silence explodes in my head
Yeah Yeah Yeah
Gimmie this gimmie that now
Step to the moonshine frenzy hail
— White Zombie, "Thunder Kiss '65"

Harzomatuili, Leader of the Sepulchre

Breed: Homid

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancer

Physical: Strength 5 (7/9/8/7), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5),
Stamina 5 (7/8/8/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 0 (0/0/0/0)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urges 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 4, Kailindo 5, Melee 5, Leadership 5, Performance 4, Repair 4, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Linguistics 5, Medicine 5, Occult 5, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Kinfolk 5, Past Life 5, Resources 5, Totem 5

Gifts: (1) Blur of the Milky Eye, Persuasion, Smell of Man, Scent of Running Water; (2) Ears of the Bat, Staredown, Spirit of the Fray; (3) Disquiet, Patagia, Foaming Fury; (4) Clenched Jaw, Crawling Poison; (5) Balefire, Rend Reality

Rank: 6

Rage 9, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8

Rites: All

Fetishes: Bane Lantern, Bane Sword, Umbraphone, Wyrm-Gut Bonds, Thunderwyrm Egg (Level 4, Gnosis 8; the Thunderwyrm Egg is in actuality a small thunderwyrm preserved in amber. When activated, it calls any thunderwyrms within a 50 mile radius to the Black Spiral Dancer's aid. If there are no thunderwyrms in the area, the Thunderwyrm Egg will hatch and the Wyrm inside will double in size, coming to the aid of the Dancer. The fetish is only usable once if it hatches, although the thunderwyrm inside will be a willing slave for as long as it lives. Mind you, the master of the thunderwyrm will have to make sure it is fed, or things could get messy.)



Background: I was born in Spain, during the time of Motecuzoma, the last great ruler of the Aztecs. My love of the Wyrm has kept me young for 500 years. I was the first of my tribe to find the Underbelly and to dedicate the Underbelly to the Hydra. As proof of my love for the Wyrm, I, Harzomatuili, continue the tradition of blood sacrifices that the Aztecs started. Since the Hive was built, I have been directly responsible for turning over 40 Garou to the ways of the Wyrm.

Pentex and I have long come to an understanding; my minions will help them if they help me. As the leader of the Underbelly of the Wyrm Hive, I have kept the Dancers well funded and provided with Dangerous Toys to pass among the population of the city — a favorite pastime during religious holidays. In exchange for the services of my Black Pack, a specialist team of commando Ahroun, Pentex ensures that my tribe never wants for anything.

Image: Harzomatuili is truly blessed by the Wyrm. He stands almost 12 feet tall in Crinos form, and is covered by patches of black lichen that have been growing within his body since the 17th time he danced the Black Spiral. To prove his dedication to the Wyrm, Harzomatuili had the glyph of the Wyrm burned into his face; his eyes alone were saved from the hideous scarring.

Roleplaying Notes: Your Rage is an unholy thing to see, and you lead your Hive by force of will and the ability to knock the sin out of your enemies. No one is permitted to question your authority and live. You love the affect your hideousness has on most people.



Bn'lart, Master of the Rite

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Philodox

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5),
Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3 (1/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 5,
Expression 3, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urges 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Leadership 4,
Performance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3,
Occult 5, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Past Life 5, Totem 5

Gifts: (1) Resist Pain, Shed, Smell Fear, Smell of Man; (2) Burrow, Ears of the Bat, A Thousand Voices, Wyrm Hide; (3) Awaken Beast, Unseelie Faerie Kin; (4) Crawling Poison, Doppleganger

Rank: 4

Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Willpower 6

Rites: All

Fetishes: Umbroscope, Soul Ruby, Wyrm-wood

Background: I was born in the Hive, and I have no need to ever leave the Hive. I do not know what lies beyond the Bawn, nor do I care. I serve the Wyrm best by staying here and observing others, the Leeches, the mages, and the Vhrujunka. I think I am making progress with this last group. We will join forces soon.

Image: Bn'lart is almost dwarfish in size, and was definitely the runt of his litter. His face is partially covered

in fur at all times, in any form. For the most part, he is hairless. His skin is an unhealthy gray.

Roleplaying Notes: Never believe the crap they feed you — you know that you are more valuable to the Hive than even Harzomatuili would like to believe. You are self ingratiating, and you make a point of never insulting anyone. Let them say what they will, you know how important you are.



Paruppt, Keeper of the Land

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Theurge

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers (Once of the Bone Gnawers)

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5),
Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 5,
Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 1, Primal-Urges 1,
Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 3, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 3, Leadership 2, Performance 3, Repair 1, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Computer 1, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2,
Medicine 3, Occult 1, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 4, Kinfolk 2, Past Life 1

Gifts: (1) Bane Protector, Create Element, Mother's Touch; (2) Blood Omen, Howl Of the Banshee

Rank: 3

Rage 6, Gnosis 4, Willpower 6

Rites: Rite of Binding, Rite of Contrition, Gathering for the Dead, Rite of Talisman Dedication, Rite of

the Fetish, Rite of Summoning, Rite of Wounding, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of Becoming, Ritual of Summoning, Rite of Passage, Rite of Ostracism, The Hunt

Fetishes: Devil Whip, 4 Bean Banes

Background: I was once with the Bone Gnawers, but the bastards of the Wyrm forced me to dance the Spiral, just as they forced themselves on me in attempts to have new pups. Fools! I cannot bear their children; I am metis. Let them try, let them do their best, I will never tell them the truth, they would kill me as a waste of time... I have joined the Wyrm, had the Wyrm forced into my mind. I can never go home again.

Image: Paruppt looks remarkably normal, with brown hair or fur and pale brown eyes. She is actually quite attractive. Her deformities are all mental, and would have led her to the Wyrm even without the Dancers forcing the issue.

Roleplaying Notes: You really hate your name, because the first sound you issued after Dancing the Spiral did not come from your mouth. You are named after a fart. If anyone makes fun of your name, kill him.



Tispardon, Master of the Challenge

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Ahroun

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers (Once of the Stargazers)

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 4 (5/5/6/6), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1 (0/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5



Talents: Alertness 5, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Empathy 2, Expression 5, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 3, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Leadership 4, Performance 3, Repair 3, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Computer 1, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 4, Medicine 3, Occult 1, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 2, Past Life 1, Contacts 4

Gifts: (1) Inspiration, Razor Claws, Sense Wyrm; (2) Ears of the Bat, Sense Silver, Spirit of the Fray; (3) Awaken Beast, Clarity, Heart of Fury; (4) Merciful Blow, Silver Claws

Rank: 4

Rage 10, Gnosis 8, Willpower 7

Rites: All

Fetishes: Deathrattler, Storm in a Bottle

Background: You would think that among the Stargazers acceptance would be a given—anger and rejection hold us back from the lessons that we should contemplate, right? No, even the Stargazers find metis-birth to be a sin, to be punished by rejection and hated for the sins of our parents. Should it not be the parents who pay the price? Should not the children be forgiven? I left my home in Denver, preferring to wander alone instead of tolerating the silent abuse of my loving tribe. When I came to Mexico City, I smelled the Wyrm in the air around me. I saw the Wyrm in the faces of the people who had surrendered their will to live to the places they were forced to dwell in, and lost the desire to conquer the odds. Here was a place where I could make a difference.

At first I saw only Bone Gnawers, and I was given companionship for a brief time. Then came the Black Spiral Dancers. I was defeated and captured as they attacked the pack I had joined with. The others in my pack were lucky: they died. I was forced to Dance the Spiral. I have been accepted as an equal by the Black Spiral Dancers; to them metis is not a foul word, but an accepted part of life. I have learned to understand my once-enemies. I have given my devotion to the Wyrm and to Harzomatuili.

Image: Three times as ugly as sin. Tispardon is covered in weeping sores and scabs that she constantly picks. She has no fur and bears several ritualistic scars.

Roleplaying Notes: Talk later, kill now. Your philosophy on any argument with someone of lower rank is to bully them and make them fear you.

Guardians of the Hive (Generic Dancers)

Breed: Metis

Auspice: Any

Tribe: Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (4/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/6)

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3 (2/1/1/1), Appearance 1 (0/0/1/1)

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 1

Skills: Firearms 2, Melee 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Contacts 4

Gifts: (1) Razor Claws, Resist Pain, Shroud

Rank: 1

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5

Rites: None

Fetishes: None

Roleplaying Notes: See the enemy, kill the enemy.

The Nosferatu Antitribu

...dear God, what is that thing?

— William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*

Blister

Sire: Aaron

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Caregiver

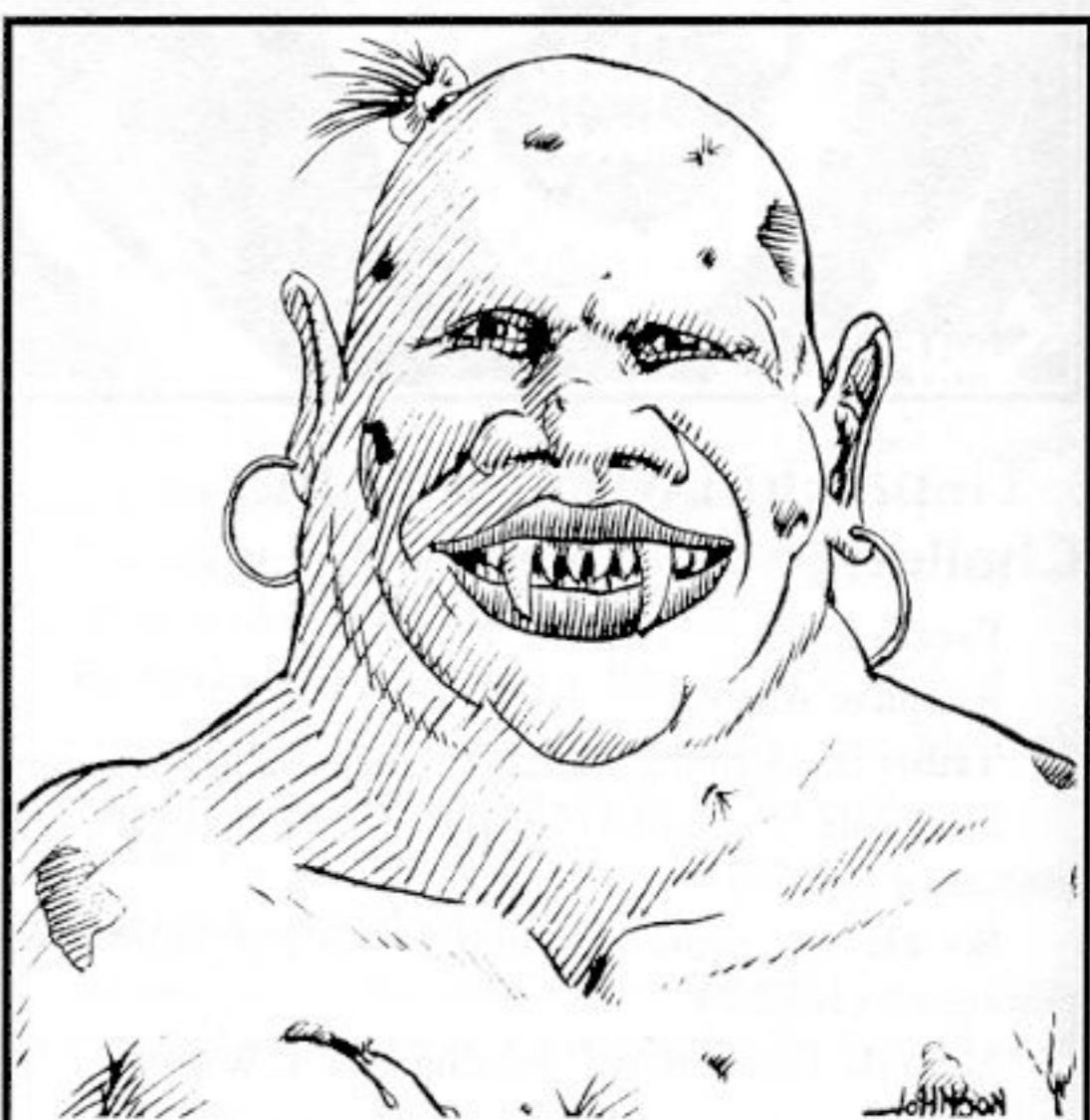
Generation: 12

Embrace: 1985

Apparent Age: 23

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 0



Mental: Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3, Streetwise 5

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 2, Melee 2, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Politics 2, Occult 4

Virtues: Callousness 5, Instincts 2, Morale 5

Disciplines: Animalism 3, Auspex 2, Fortitude 2, Obfuscate 3, Potence 2

Backgrounds: Resources 2, Contacts 3, Allies 3

Haven: The Underbelly

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 4

Willpower 6

Background: I was one of the many people crushed beneath the weight of falling buildings in the earthquake of 1985. I lay pinned beneath my father's bloating corpse for almost a week before Aaron found me. By then I had found sustenance where once I had only found affection. I have learned that what I did is acceptable in the Sabbat, and this pleases me. Aaron fed on me and then he fed me. I have left the world above, at least until I can be certain that everyone believes me dead. Sometimes, I swear I hear my father asking me to give him back his leg.

Image: Blister is big and blue. She has more cellulite on her body than the average hippopotamus and more teeth than three sharks. Blisters cover her body and rupture at the lightest contact. These blisters drip green puss that strongly resembles the waters of what was Lake Teztoco

Roleplaying Notes: Giggle frequently. Any time someone makes a comment about your looks, do your best to French kiss the guilty party.

Juan Antonio Lopez de Aguirre – Skidmark

Sire: Joseph Cambridge

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Child

Generation: 9th

Embrace: 1964

Apparent Age: 30

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3

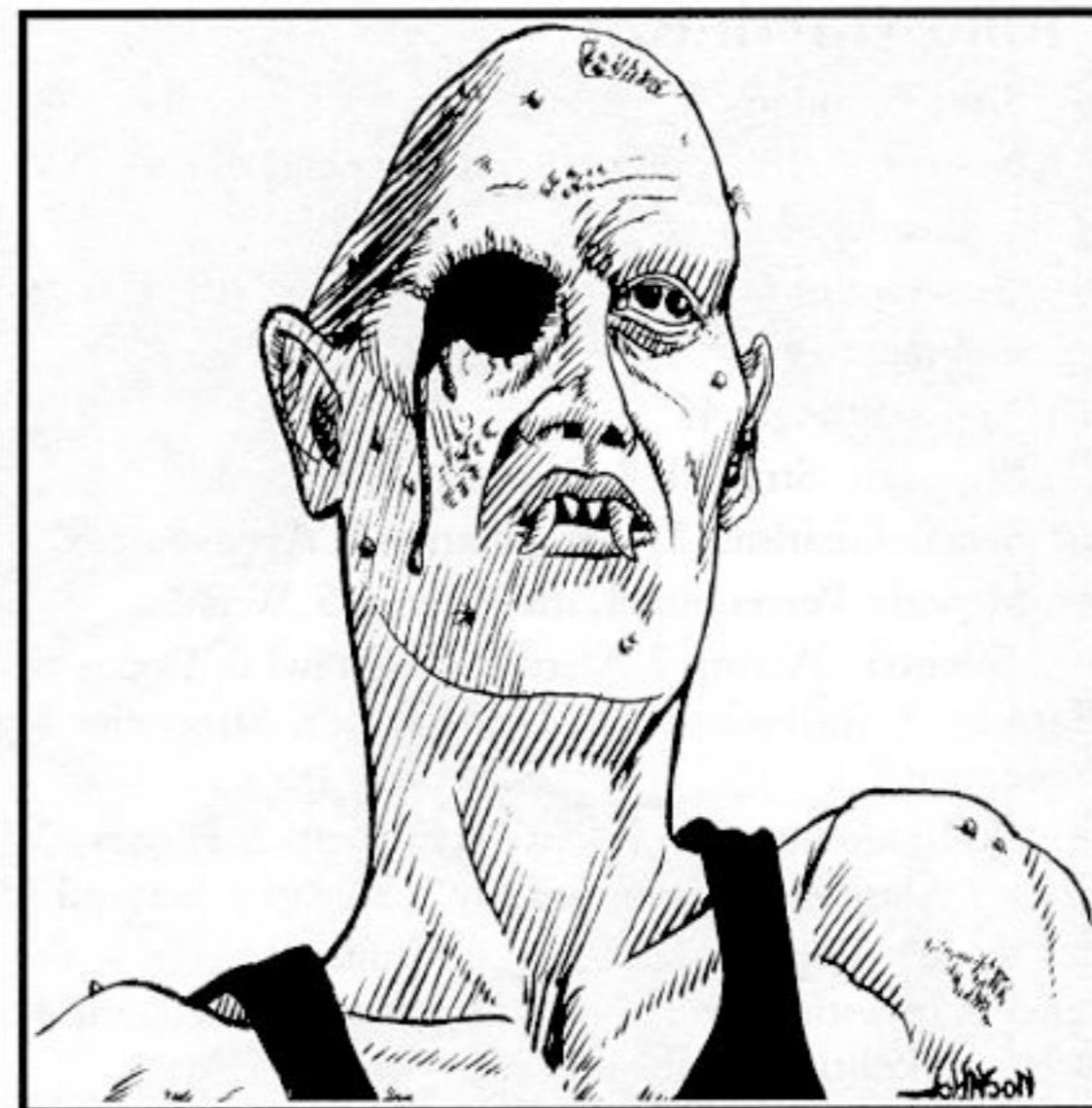
Knowledges: None that he can remember.

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 5, Morale 1

Disciplines: Auspex 3, Fortitude 4, Potence 2, Obfuscate 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Mentor 3

Haven: Lake Teztoco



Path of Enlightenment: None

Willpower 2

Background: I wish I knew where I came from; I wish my head did not hurt. I wish I was still handsome. I wish I had never seen Joseph Cambridge. I remember him feeding on me after he broke me body. I remember crawling in the gutters and rivers from Los Angeles to Mexico City, to my home. I remember finding the other blue people and I remember them laying me in the sweet waters of the fire lake. I remember the pain of healing bones, bones that had been broken for many months. They are my friends; if I could think well, I would tell them that I love them. Somehow, I think they already know.

Image: Skidmark is repugnant. Despite the lake water's healing powers, his bones had not been set. Most of his body has been twisted into shapes that should not be possible. His head is caved in on one side, and patches of lichen coated skull gleam through his warty hide. Only one of his eyes survived the beating he took at the hands of Joseph Cambridge, but that one eye has managed to grow another pupil and iris. The socket from his other eye is constantly leaking raw sewage from his time spent wallowing.

Roleplaying Notes: Grin and drool. When you are asked what happened somewhere, you recite any conversation you heard there verbatim. You recite the information to anyone who will listen.

Julio Martinez

Sire: Petrodon

Nature: Architect (Sepulchre Member)

Demeanor: Martyr

Generation: 6th

Embrace: 1437

Apparent Age: 45

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 7

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 7

Talents: Acting 7 Alertness 5, Brawl 6, Dodge 6, Empathy 3, Intimidation 6, Leadership 5, Streetwise 7, Subterfuge 7

Skills: Animal Ken 7, Drive 4, Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Melee 7, Music 4, Repair 6, Security 7, Stealth 6, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 6, Camarilla Lore 4, Finance 6, Investigation 7, Law 2, Linguistics 7, Medicine 4, Occult 7, Politics 7, Sabbat Lore 3, Science 5

Virtues: Callousness 5, Self-Control Instincts 5, Morale 4

Disciplines: Animalism 6, Auspex 6, Celerity 4, Dark Thaumaturgy 6 (Chains of Pleasure 3, Fires of Inferno 5, Path of Pestilence 5, Path of Phoebos 3, Path of Secret Knowledge 4, Path of Torture 3) Dominate 7, Fortitude 6, Presence 7, Potence 7, Obscure 7, Obtenebration 3, Necromancy 5

Investments: (7) Hellskinned, Bat Ears, Magic Sense

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Herd 5, Influence 4, Resources 5, Retainers 5

Haven: The Underbelly

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations: 8

Willpower 10



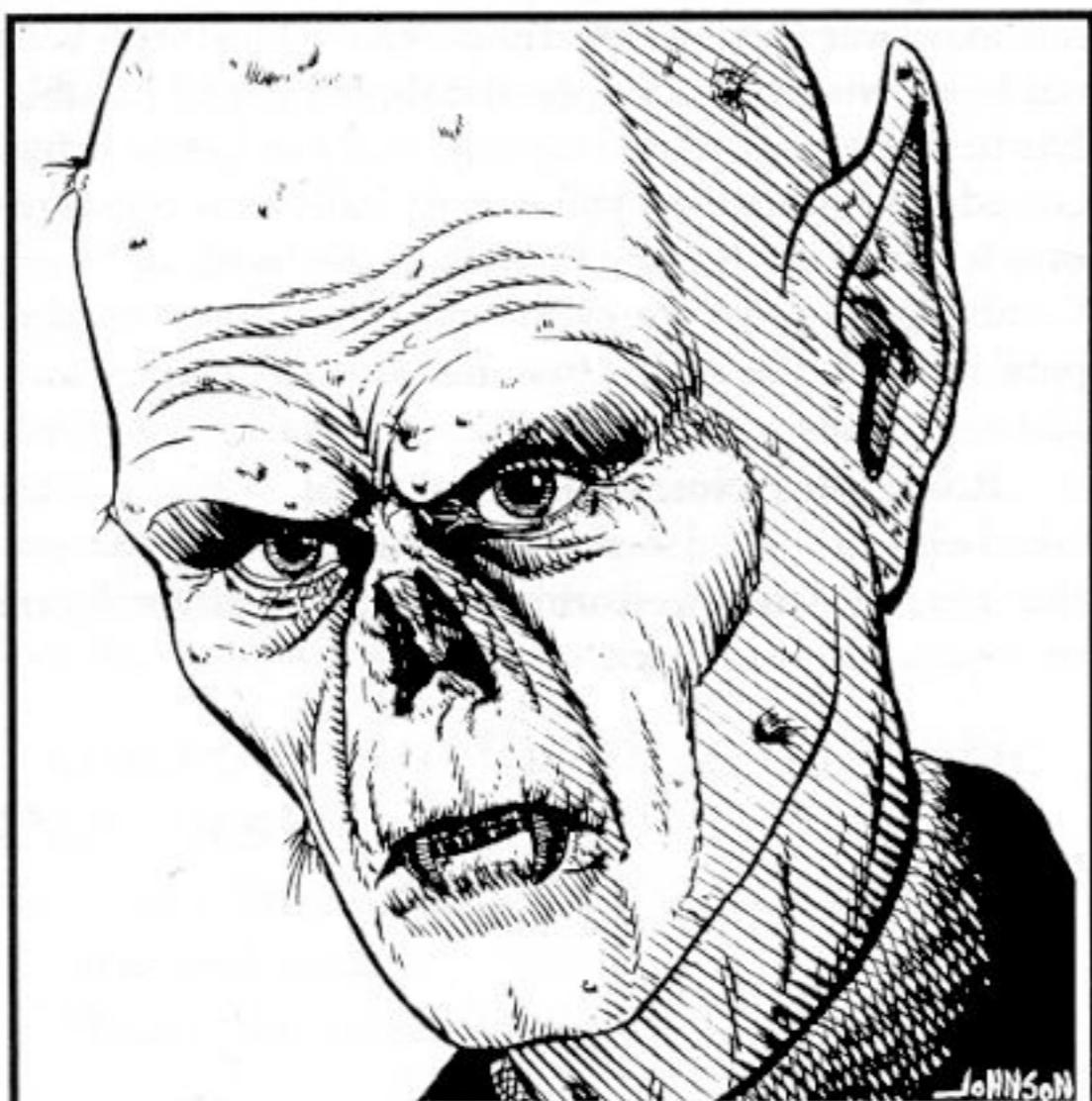
Background: Do not attempt to tell me of power; I know power. I have seen power in all of its myriad forms, and I have learned that power is simply a tool to be used, not a thing to be worshipped. I used to serve Petrodon, my Sire, my Master, the Justicar of the Nosferatu. He sent me to Mexico City, to learn what I could of the Sabbat's fledgling capital. I should have known better than to think that he would play fairly with me. I was captured and tortured until my spirit was broken.

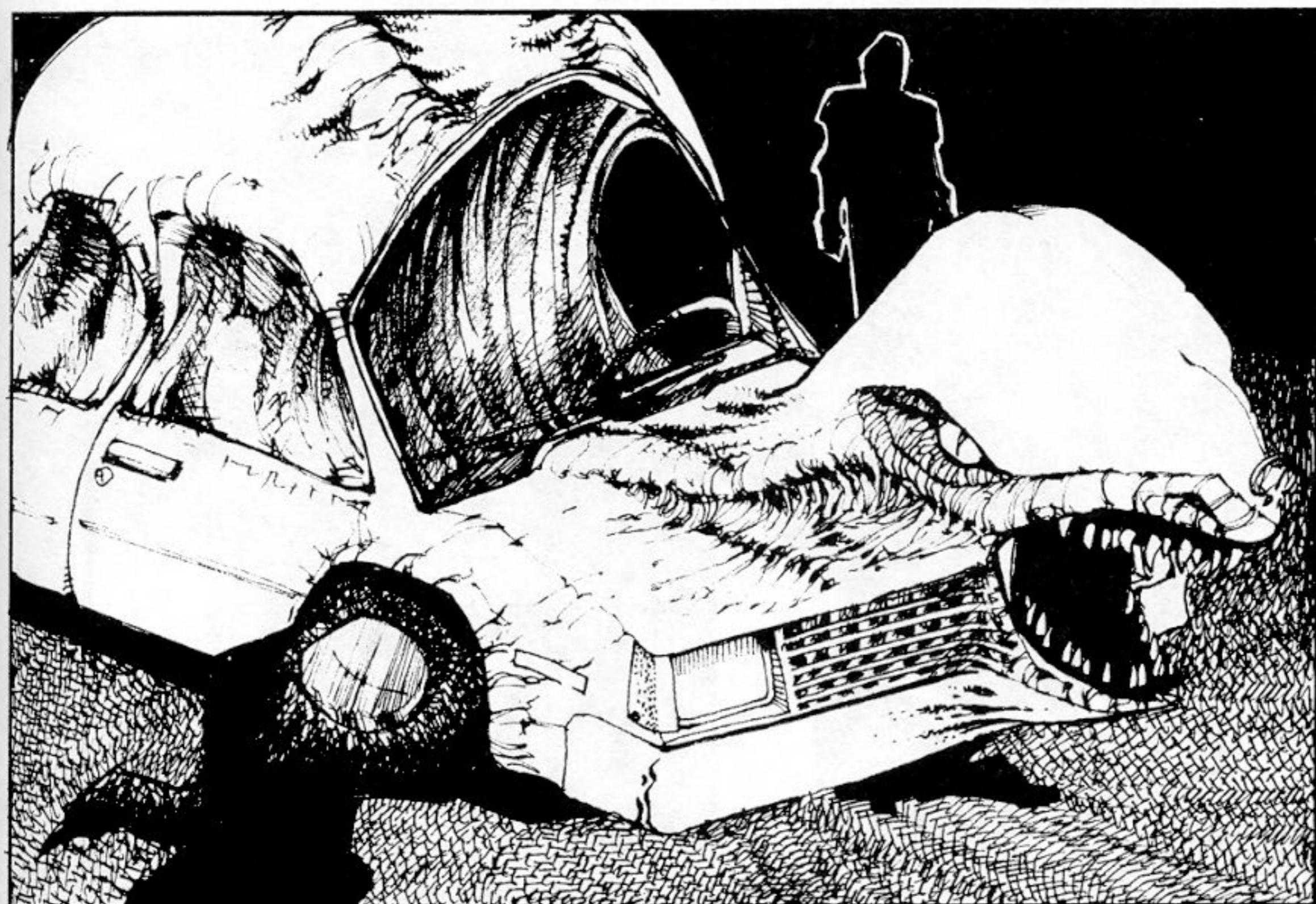
When the tortures at last ended, I had told the Sabbat Nosferatu everything I knew about Petrodon and his present actions. At least they thought I had. Petrodon was there, in my mind, and experienced every torture inflicted upon me. He answered every question through his Blood-Bond with me, and led the Nosferatu Antitribu into a trap that resulted in their Final Deaths.

He left me behind to rule in their stead; I have long since Diablerized everyone who stood in my way. Petrodon had accomplished his mission, and the distance between the Regnant and Thrall has long since destroyed the Bond. I still remember the tortures Petrodon left me to suffer, and I have been converted to the Sabbat's beliefs for some time. Perhaps I would have been killed, but I went to Melinda Galbraith, the regent of Mexico, and I explained all that had transpired. She has kept my presence hidden from her followers, and I in turn listen to what they have to say and to what their plans are. Several people have died for speaking aloud of replacing Melinda. I have made certain of that.

Image: Julio is gaunt, remarkably thin for so powerful a figure. Patches of white hair grow from the warts on his body, and even from his eyes. His skin is as coarse as sandpaper, and his teeth are almost black. His skin has a very strong green cast.

Roleplaying Notes: You work best through negotiations. The only knowledge given for free is the knowledge that will ingratiate you with someone of power.





Aaron Bathurst - Tequila

Sire: Don Carlos

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Bravo

Generation: 11

Embrace: 1945

Apparent Age: 30

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Drive 4, Firearms 5, Melee 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Investigation 4, Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 5

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 3, Morale 2

Disciplines: Animalism 2, Auspex 4, Fortitude 4, Potence 3, Obfuscate 5

Backgrounds: Contacts 5, Allies 3

Haven: His armored garage.

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 6

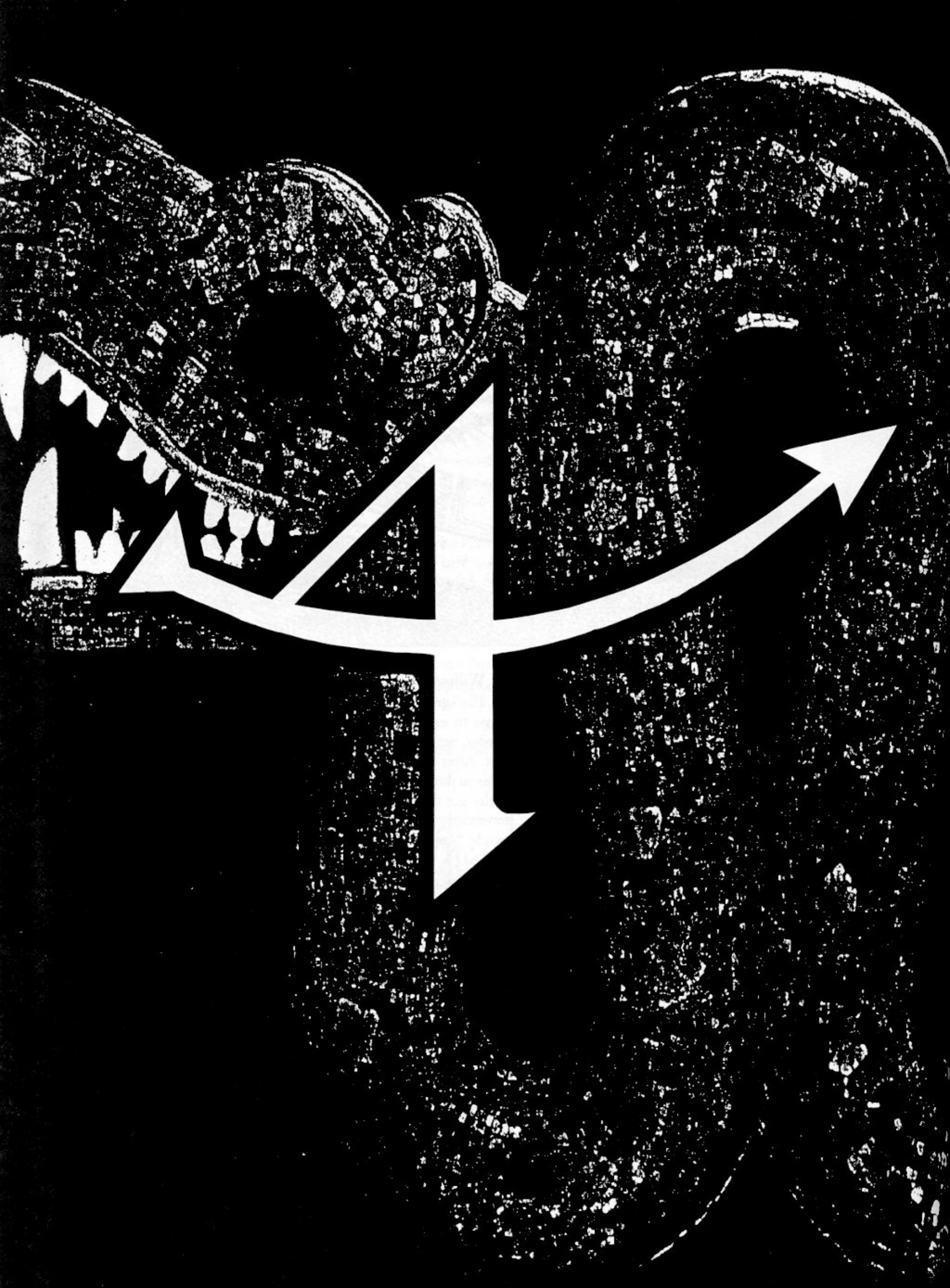
Willpower: 6

Background: I came down to Mexico City from San Diego to escape a few minor altercations with the law: murder, rape and grand theft auto... Naturally, I was innocent. After a few weeks I got a job working as a taxi driver. I was making decent tips because I spoke English. Don Carlos got the idea of Embracing me when he took my cab home early one morning. As I regaled him with tales of the people I met at the airport, Don Carlos listened and learned.

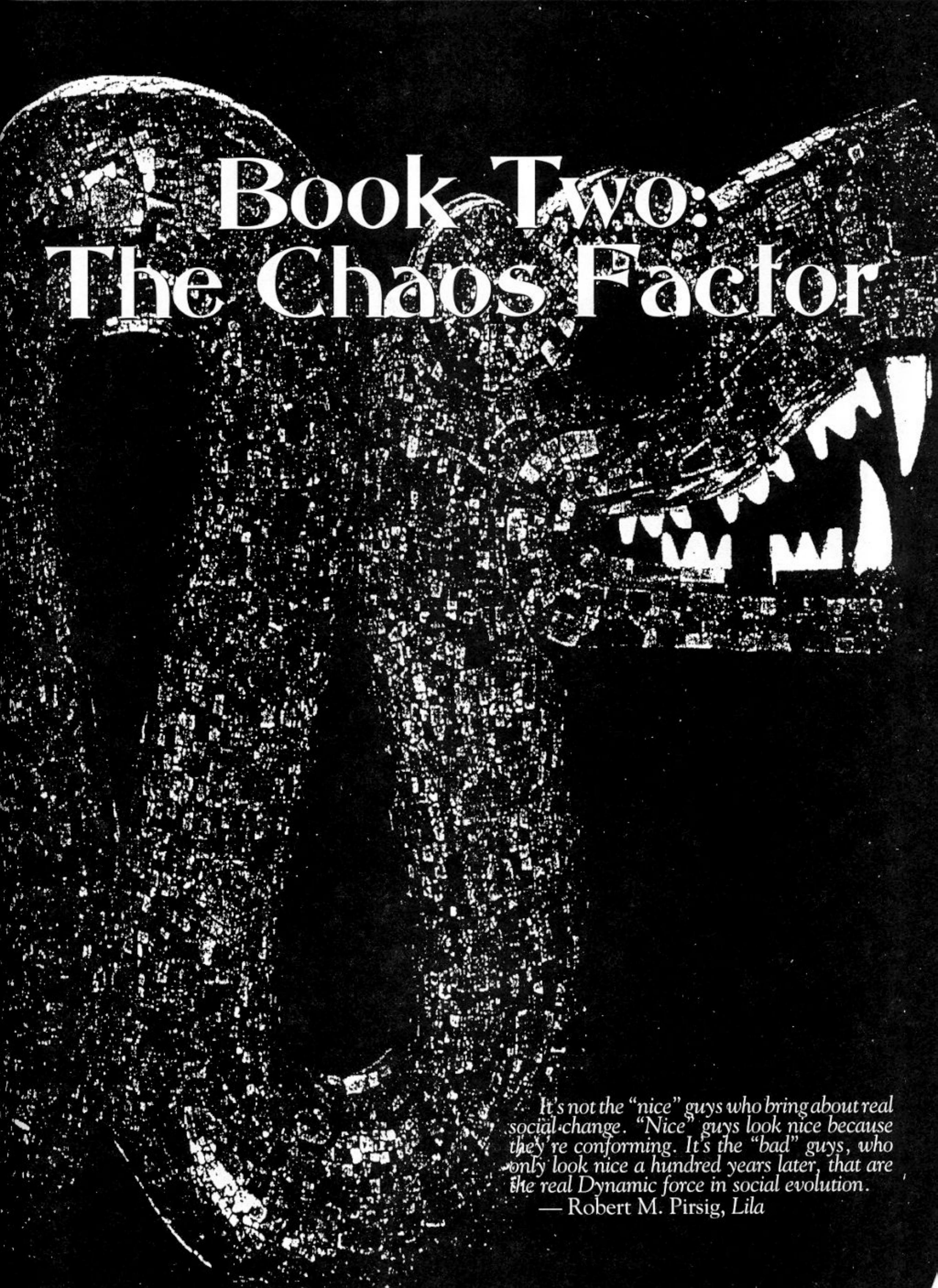
Don Carlos purchased a limosine for me just after he Embraced me, and had a Tzimisce who owed him a favor alter my features to look human. I must wear makeup, but I have learned a lot from the minor dignitaries and the famous as I drive them through town. I have a reputation for being a good listener, and for being discreet enough to keep my mouth shut. What they don't know won't kill me.

Image: A stocky handsome man in his thirties. Aaron is bald and wears a chauffeur's cap wherever he goes. His face tends to shine from the grease paint used to hide his skin color.

Roleplaying Notes: Be friendly, make idle chit-chat and glean as much information as you can. Never get pushy unless they get pushy first.



Book Two: The Chaos Factor



It's not the "nice" guys who bring about real social change. "Nice" guys look nice because they're conforming. It's the "bad" guys, who only look nice a hundred years later, that are the real Dynamic force in social evolution.

— Robert M. Pirsig, *Lila*



Introduction

If war were a game that a man or a child
Could think of winning
What kind of rule
Can overthrow a fool
And leave the land with no stain
— Suzanne Vega, "Song of Sand"



The Chaos Factor is a crossover adventure for Mage, Werewolf and Vampire. The story may include any combination of characters; special sections at the end of each chapter present suggestions for character combinations and explain general relationships among the various factions. Appendix Two contains crossover rules for the various supernatural beings.

Reference

"The Chaos Factor" continues and concludes the story of Samuel Haight, the Garou Skinner and murderer of the Crombey Farm Chantry's World Tree. Samuel Haight has been seen previously in *The Valkenburg Foundation*, *The Storyteller's Handbook to the Sabbat*, *Rage Across the Amazon*, *The Book of Chantries*, *White Wolf Magazine* # 40, *New Orleans by Night* and *When Will You Rage?* Needless to say, he gets around. If you do not have any or

all of the aforementioned, don't worry; all of the information about Haight needed to run "The Chaos Factor" can be found within this book.

Several books, while not necessary, will make the Storyteller's role easier and add flavor to the Story. If the Story is going to be used as a crossover event, the following supplements all hold useful information:

For vampires: *Vampire: The Masquerade*; *The Vampire Player's Guide Second Edition*; *The Player's Guide to the Sabbat*; *The Storyteller's Handbook of the Sabbat*; *A World of Darkness*.

For werewolves: *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*; *The Werewolf Player's Guide*; *The Book of the Wyrm*; *Caerns: Places of Power*; *A World of Darkness*.

For mages: *Mage: The Ascension*; *The Book of Chantries*; *The Book of Shadows*; *The Book of Madness*; *A World of Darkness*.

The Story



The Plot: "The Chaos Factor" takes place over several days and nights, and a complete chronological calendar of events is included for ease of use. Due to the time limits placed on player characters and the ways in which various factions are likely to respond to Haight's actions, any number of things may happen. You will likely be referring to the Events Calendar regularly.

The Basic Plot

The final tale of Samuel Haight breaks down into two parts: Chapter One involves the search for Haight and the beginning of the war in Mexico City. Chapter Two details the final stage of the chase and the last confrontation.

Chapter One: Trail of Blood

Part One: Countdown to Extinction

Days One and Two of the Days of the Dead — Day of the Orphaned Souls, Day of the Unpardoned Souls.

Samuel Haight reaches Mexico City, intent on locating and awakening what he mistakenly believes to be an

Warning!

"The Chaos Factor" can be exceedingly deadly. Foolish characters won't last through the first night. Players must be clever and careful to survive until the story's conclusion.

Storytellers, on the other hand, must be both generous and fair. While stupidity should be rewarded by a quick death, ingenuity ought to be worth an even break. "The Chaos Factor" is not "Grimtooth's Traps;" your Troupe should feel endangered but not hopeless.

Some sort of healing dispensation should be offered; your characters will need it. One or more characters with Gifts, objects or effects that heal aggravated damage are essential. Many of the Storyteller characters have items that can assist the Troupe, provided players can acquire them somehow. Sudden intervention by outside parties — ghosts, friendly Garou, Paradox Spirits coming after the other guys — is also a good idea, provided that your Troupe doesn't become dependent on miracle saviors. Flipping between frying pan and fire and back again is good for the appetite.

Reality goes haywire during the Mexican war; let drama, suspense and good judgment rule the day.

Antediluvian vampire. As usual, Haight brings several agents and employs them in random attacks to spur the Awakened of Mexico City into a furor. The Skinner tracks down and locates the false Haven of the Methuselah, deep within the bowels of the Underbelly of the Wyrm, while chaos builds in the city. Opportunities for introducing the player characters are presented, if they do not already live in Mexico City. Additionally, a section at the end covers what happens in the city if the player characters do not become involved.

The Troupe arrives too late. By the time they reach the Methuselah's false lair, Samuel Haight is gone. Clues left in the area tell the Troupe where Haight has gone, and could allow them to build a trap for the Skinner's return. Events in Mexico City grow more desperate; the Troupe is introduced to several potential allies; should they trust them, or will the allies betray them to Haight, or something even worse?

Part Two: Vacation

Day Three of the Days of the Dead — Day of the Dead Children

Samuel Haight journeys to Jordan, tracking his trail of clues to Petra and encountering and escaping the powerful forces that control the area. Does the Troupe dare to follow? If so, will they survive? Complications and conflicts will arise as the players run a gauntlet of vampiric enemies and the sinister leader of Petra, Talaq, along with his minions in the Mossad.

Evidence comes to light that several factions in the World of Darkness want to protect Haight. Who are they and why do they want to help him?

Chapter Two: Treasure of Tears

Part Three: Chaos Squared

Day Four of the Days of the Dead — Day of Welcoming the Adults

Samuel Haight returns to Mexico City, determined to gain vengeance on the ones responsible for misleading him. The Wraiths in Mexico City are upset. In the Gloom, things have been stirred that should not be stirred; the angry dead seek vengeance as well. The Sabbat, the Technocracy and the other ruling factions in Mexico City must deal with the players, the dead, and each other. The Troupe must deal with all of the offended parties, while the Garou gather for a Moot in preparation for the Rite of the Dead in the heart of the city. What will the Troupe do? Mages from the Euthanatos Tradition, Uktena and Bone Gnawer Garou,

the Samedi and Giovanni Kindred enter the city to perform powerful Rites, and a surprise visit from the Marauders wreaks havoc on the city.

Part Four: Chaos Cubed

The Day Five of the Days of the Dead — the Exorcism of the Dead.

Samuel Haight has left the city, intent on finding and awakening the ancient vampire. Did the characters arrive before him? Will they arrive too late to stop him? Will the Kindred want to Diablerize one of the most powerful Kindred in the World of Darkness? The truth about Huitzilopochtli is at last revealed. What will be the final fate of Samuel Haight?

Prelude: Getting the Characters involved

Mages

Samuel Haight is a menace to the Awakened; he has made that point clear on at least two separate occasions. Samuel Haight did not learn the secrets of True Magick — he stole them. He stole them from El Dorado, and he stole them from the Crombey Chantry. Anyone with ties to the Dreamspeakers or the Verbena will want his head on a platter if only for the sake of revenge. The fact that he is unpredictable and a very obvious threat to the Awakened should be enough to force any mage's hand; what if their Chantry is next?

The Technocracy disapproves of Samuel Haight. He is a wild, untamed threat to all that they stand for. While he has managed on several previous occasions to beat all of the odds and cause irreparable harm to the Traditions — not a bad thing in and of itself — he has also managed to literally steal a Node. What's to stop him from trying to attack a Technocracy Node? The New World Order has a small dossier on Haight, compiled mostly of rumors and innuendo. If the statements in the files are true, the madman has a following among the Masses, and has even Awakened some as Garou. The laws of the Pogrom have been broken, and Haight goes unpunished. For the common good, Haight must go. If possible, he should be captured and studied, and possibly converted. The catch, naturally, is finding him. Haight has an annoying habit of disappearing at the worst possible times...



Relationships of the Awakened

"The Chaos Factor" allows for various factions to join together in a fight to the finish against Samuel Haight. There are several variables to consider while getting the characters involved in the story, not the least of which is how the characters will react to one another.

The World of Darkness as a whole already has several examples of how the various factions can work together, but the Storytellers should remember that many supernaturals know little or nothing about their counterparts in the World of Darkness. Those who do know something about the other factions of supernaturals often know just enough to get themselves in trouble; more often than not, the information they have about other entities is incorrect.

Garou and Mage Relations: The Black Furies, the Verbena and the Dreamspeakers have worked well together in the past. There is no reason that they cannot work well together now. Dreamspeaker mages seem to get along well with most Garou, and often times have been willing to come to their aid. Bone Gnawers sometimes get along with Hollow Ones, as evidenced in *The Book of Chanties*.

Garou and Kindred Relations: Garou and Kindred do not get along. The Gangrel Clan is a rare exception, but even when the Gangrel and werewolves do get along, the relationship is usually strained. Recent times have been even worse, as evidenced by the bloody war for Chicago. Occasionally, the Sabbat Kindred and the Black Spiral Dancers manage to form alliances, but they seldom hold together well.

Mage and Kindred Relations: Most mages and Kindred tend to ignore each other, but their infrequent relationships hold together better than most Garou and Kindred alliances. Many of the Technocracy, ironically enough, share the Kindred's goals: Both groups want the cities to increase in size and both want the Sleepers to mind their own business, albeit for entirely different reasons. However, these two factions of the World of Darkness do not work well together. The Technocracy views vampires as aberrations that should be exterminated. The Kindred view mages as fools playing with forces they cannot hope to comprehend.

Political power plays are common for all three groups, even among their own kind. In many cases the goals of one group are in accordance with the desires of other groups, but that lends very little to any attempts at solidarity. More often the beliefs and motivations of the different groups conflict. A Red Talon Garou is not likely to agree with Sabbat expansion beliefs, nor with the philosophies of the Technocracy in general. Their ideals are set too far apart to make for easy alliance. The Traditions and Tremere have a long-standing feud, and that feud will definitely get in the way of their working together. The various pitfalls in a relationship might be put aside for a brief time, but seldom for long. As often as not, long-time enemies are likely to wait for an excuse to remove obstacles from their long term path, permanently if possible.

All of this should be kept in mind when introducing the Troupe to "The Chaos Factor."

Kindred

Ironically, the vampires have no harsh feelings towards Samuel Haight. He helped the Sabbat in their battle to stop a demon from making his home in their city (see *The Storyteller's Guide to the Sabbat*), and he aided the Camarilla in breaking up a Kindred slavery ring (see *New Orleans by Night*). Most Kindred tend to think of Haight as an ally if not a friend; he has decreased the Lupine population, and warned the vampires in their times of need. He has, in short, made the world a slightly safer place for the Kindred as a whole with his actions. Why should they want to stop him?

Haight is an interesting character. However, while he has proven useful in the past, he could just as easily be a threat. He seems to know too much about the Kindred for safety, but he has yet to use that knowledge for personal gain. There are several rumors that he has killed and feasted on Kindred in the past, but there is certainly no proof. No one has been able to Blood-Bond him as yet, and he has helped both the Sabbat and the Camarilla; there is the possibility that he is working for another faction of the Kindred, a worry that should not be ignored. What if he should make a bargain with the mages, many of whom would like to see the Kindred removed? How much knowledge is safe in the hands of a stranger?

If the rumors are true, he has plans to awaken the Antediluvians, or at the very least to steal their Vitae. Awakening the Antediluvians must not be allowed, and if anyone is to have their blood, shouldn't it be the Childer?

Garou

Samuel Haight seems indestructible. He has been defeated in combat and ripped limb from limb before the very eyes of the Garou, yet he keeps returning. This vile, Wyrm-ridden false Garou must be stopped at all costs! He knows the strengths and weaknesses of the Garou as only a Kinfolk can, and he has slaughtered too many of Gaia's chosen warriors. How can he be allowed to live? He consorts with Leeches and with Black Spiral Dancers, and he shows himself to be the enemy of Gaia's warriors with his every action. It is imperative that he be stopped before his twisted plans to make more like himself can reach fruition! He continues to take the skins of his enemies, possibly to create more like himself. Must the Garou be afraid whenever they meet a strange Garou? Must they fear even their own Kinfolk in these final days?

Samuel Haight was Kinfolk before he became Garou, and this is the ultimate insult. The Skinner has vowed to create still more Skin-Dancers, using the skins of dead Garou as a catalyst in other Kinfolk's First Change. Many werewolves look back on how they have treated their Kin and wonder if a threatening gesture is all that is needed for a neglected family member to join Haight in his mad schemes. In many cases, these unvoiced worries are coming too late.

Haight must be destroyed at all costs. He is the Wyrm in wolf's clothing.

Early Signs of the Storm:



In the heart of every stranger
Here he comes, look out
Teach the world a lesson
Here he comes, look out
— Faith No More, "Crack Hitler"

A Garou Prelude:

There were seven of them in all, sitting around the dying embers of the Moot's fire. The air was chilly, but the fur on their bodies kept them warm. Elated from the celebrations, exhausted by the dancing, the Garou sat in silence for several minutes, enjoying the quiet of the night and reveling in Luna's beauty.

Segrid-Sings-Off-Key, the Fianna, spoke first: "They're saying the Skinner's still alive." His voice was rich, full of the gusto for life that only the Ragabash ever really seem to appreciate. Still, the words were solemn. "I heard he took out a whole group of witches in Kansas. Killed a few of them and stole the power from the rest."

Some of the younger Garou made noises, tried to shrug off the rumors. Old Sawbones actually shivered where she sat. "I heard from an old friend of mine in San Francisco, Beatnik, that he found skinned bodies in an old station wagon. He didn't know if the Skinner was responsible, but says that the car stank of Black Spiral Dancers." She spat into the fire, watched the spittle rise as steam and continued. "Last thing anyone needs is the Dancers learning from Haight."

One of the pups, not even named yet, spoke up. He sounded like he was just telling ghost stories at the campfire: "I heard about a caern in Texas, not far from San Antonio. I heard it was abandoned, but the smell of Garou blood was in the air and the words SAMUEL HAIGHT WAS HERE were carved into the skinless corpses of the Elders." He looked ready to continue, until he saw the faces around him. None of the others looked like they found the idea amusing. For all they knew, the rumors were true.

One by one, they told the stories they'd heard; some were preposterous, almost certainly having nothing to do with Samuel Haight, but still the tales were told, still the fear built. He'd been killed before, but he'd come back. How could anyone know for certain that Haight wasn't alive? In Alaska, the skinning of several Garou had occurred — simultaneously, dozens of wolves were being slaughtered by the humans. Could Haight be responsible? In Los Angeles the recent earthquake allegedly uncovered the skinned remains of over 20 Garou. In Ontario, Garou were disappearing, and in Russia the werewolves talked of still more mysterious deaths.

Even if he was dead, the Skinner's name was used too frequently. Finally, the Wendigo spoke. Leaps-To-The

Clouds spoke just above a whisper, as he had ever since his throat had been torn out. "I hear that Samuel Haight is on his way to Mexico City, getting ready to join with the Leeches and bring down the Garou once and for all...."

The pack is at their caern when the word comes from the Pure Heart Sept that Samuel Haight has recently been sighted in Arizona. John Black Horse, a Kinfolk of the Wendigo, claims to have met a man calling himself Samuel Haight. He further claims that the man offered him a chance to become Garou. The Sept of the Painted Sands attempted to locate the man, but with no success. Black Horse also claims that Haight was on his way to Mexico City, to "find a powerful ally and stir the waters of discontent." Some find it strange that Black Horse would bother to warn his Kinfolk, as they have never been close. Others, especially at the Pure Heart Sept, believe that this simply proves the case; Haight is looking to make more like himself from the disgruntled Kinfolk.

Talking with Black Horse proves difficult; he was found dismembered only hours after he made his phone call to Ann Susan Black Horse, his sister. No one at the sept has met with Haight before, but a strange Garou's scent was on Black Horse's body, and the taint of the Wyrm was strongly mingled with that scent.

The Elders of the pack's caern are likely to pass the news, especially if the pack members are Wendigo or have battled Haight before. If the pack has met the Skinner before and opts to examine the evidence remaining — John Black Horse's corpse — they will indeed find the scent of Samuel Haight on the body. For the first time, Garou have advanced warning of where Haight is likely to show himself. A chance like this may never come again.

However, Mexico City has few Garou, and most of the werewolves there are minions of the Wyrm. The entire city is overflowing with Leeches, and there are no true septs to be found in the city. The trip is likely to be a long one. Any attempts to open an Attack Moon-Bridge, or even a Wild Moon-Bridge to Mexico City, will land the pack in the very heart of the Underbelly of the Wyrm, the only location in the entire region with Moon-Bridge access. Any Garou landing in the Underbelly of the Wyrm may rest in peace. The Garou do not even know that the Underbelly exists, and aren't prepared for what they may come up against.



A Prelude for Mages:

"I hear it was a werewolf that took out Crombey's Farm. Does anyone know if that's true?" The words came out sounding too casual, happy in a nasty way. The rest of the cabal looked at Trina as if she'd lost her mind. They were sitting in a small cafe, eating choices from the large menu and sipping at their preferred coffee blends. Three of the cabal put their hands over their eyes, massaging the painful headaches they knew would be on them in only seconds.

Grimm looked the young Euthanatos in the face and scalded her with his eyes. "Smooth, real subtle. Hope you've already picked where you want your body buried this time."

"Yes, child. It's true." The voice coming from behind Trina was cold, brittle with repressed anger. She turned quickly and backed away even faster. Allaister Crombey stepped towards her, his face a pale mask, expressionless. Then he smiled, a thin, nasty smile, and Trina wished she could just disappear. Trina sensed the sheer power that the man could wield, practically felt his anger as a physical thing. "He 'took out' my ancestral Chantry, and he killed my wife, and he raped the Chantry's World Tree of its power." The rage he felt colored his face crimson, but the smile was there. The hoary chill still echoed in his voice. "If it's all the same to you, however, I'd rather that be kept quiet." His voice lowered by several octaves. "I'd rather not let Samuel Haight know that there's a bounty for bringing him to me, dead or alive."

The Awakened have their own reasons for wanting Haight dead or, in the case of the Technocracy, captured and studied. Haight has made many enemies among the mages and has done little to make allies. The level of Paradox that Haight is likely to achieve if he is left to his own devices could prove detrimental to the health of anyone around him, and again, he has already destroyed one Node.

Rumors start coming in that a small Chantry of Orphans has been destroyed in Carmel, California, by unknown forces. There is no solid proof available that Samuel Haight is responsible, but the small Node that once existed there is gone, and the Technocracy has different methods for handling Nodes and Chantries.

The characters may have known one or more of the Orphans, or might simply want to know what is killing mages. If they are actively pursuing Haight for what happened to the Crombeys, or to the Dreamspeaker El Dorado, they could hear of the attack on the Orphan Chantry. There was a total of four Orphans in the Chantry, and they traveled extensively, performing in their own band, the Bottomless Pit. From time to time they even played at Goth bars around the country, especially on the west coast.

Their names were Sandi Calloway, Brit Langley, Jason Fredericks and Tony Cruise. The remains of their bodies were found in the basement of the burned out house. Jason's

tortured soul can be heard screaming in pain; his lingering death has driven him insane. Those who visit the site and can communicate with the dead could gather positive identification of Samuel Haight (Spirit 2 and Mind 3, plus a Manipulation + Enigmas roll, difficulty 7).

The Technocracy will attempt to gather information as well. The only solid information available, via telephone communications records, is that the culprit is on his way to Mexico City and apparently meeting a good two dozen people there. The people who were called from this residence in the last two weeks have since moved on. The only exception is Diane White in San Francisco California, and she has no idea where Samuel Haight is, though she will profess to knowing him. Use of the proper Spheres makes discovering the truth much easier, but could also lead to trouble. A trio of Men in Black approach the characters shortly after the Troupe arrives. They are aware of the incident and will do their best to apprehend or destroy the characters if the players start sifting through the ruins too much. The Technocracy is very interested in discovering what caused the explosion.

A Vampire Prelude:

"Any of you know Samuel Haight? Yeah? Well, listen: I've heard he's going down to Mexico City. I hear he knows where an Antediluvian is resting. No, he ain't gonna kill the Ancient, he's gonna make friends with it. No, I'm serious. He says he wants to get some of its blood, just so he can stay young. No, he doesn't want the Embrace, says it could kill him, on account of his being a Lupine. Yeah, but he's still okay in my book. Hey, anyone that kills werewolves is okay in my book."

"Well, the deal's like this: he wants help on the way. He wants someone to cover his ass while he's doing all the dirty work. So who's to say we have to let him have all the fun? Me? Well, let's just say I'm not above a little late-night snack. Hell yes, I'll join him."

Sabbat player characters have it easy; Haight is entering Sabbat territory and knows enough about the Sabbat to understand that Kindred tend to move from place to place. He would not be surprised by any member of the Sabbat being found in the area.

There is a very real chance that any Kindred who has met with Samuel Haight before remembers him fondly. The same can be said in reverse. While it is not the recommended method for getting the players involved, Haight might offer them a chance to assist him in locating what he believes to be an Antediluvian. Haight only makes this offer to Kindred who have actually performed Diablerie in front of him.

Haight recognizes the boundaries between the Sabbat and the Camarilla, a thought that makes many vampires leery. He is ignorant of the Anarch Freestates, and will only respond to Kindred of the Sabbat while in their territory. Camarilla players could well be invited along



Timeline of “The Chaos Factor”

October 2nd:

Samuel Haight encounters and kills the inhabitants of a small Orphan Chantry in Carmel, California. The energies from the Node are absorbed into Haight's staff over the next three days. All attempts to gaze into the future fail, as a result of future Paradox.

October 7th:

Haight destroys the Orphan Chantry's physical location.

October 9th:

Haight encounters John Black Horse near the Sept of the Painted Sands in Arizona. Haight Offers the Kinfolk the powers of a Garou. Black Horse declines.

October 10th:

Haight kills Black Horse after Black Horse reports to his cousin, a Garou at the sept.

October 27th:

Haight enters Mexico City.

October 28th: (The First Day of the Dead)

Explosions rock the city at 12:01 PM. Several Kindred are nearly destroyed in the resulting fires, and traffic is stopped for hours. The police forces in Mexico City begin investigating the explosions. Among the forces are several Men in Black and several HIT Marks. Paranoia stirs among the supernaturals of Mexico City.

October 29th: (The Second Day of the Dead)

Haight enters the Underbelly of the Wyrm. The Minions of Pandemonium are outraged by the invasion of their secret domain.

October 30th: (The Third Day of the Dead)

Haight leaves Mexico City, co-locating to Jordan. While there, he encounters several strange mages who lead him on his way to Paraiso Vista. The Troupe, if they follow, encounter first the mages of Al Durab, and then the forces of Petra, a powerful, militaristic city that hides a terrifying secret.

October 31st: (The Fourth Day of the Dead/Halloween)

Samuel Haight returns to Mexico City. The Technocracy calls for a purge of all supernaturals in Mexico City. Chaos explodes as Sabbat and Technocracy forces meet in combat. The Dead rise to defend their families from both groups, and the Garou are caught in the middle. Kindred, Tradition mages, and Garou come to the city from various points around the world for their own reasons.

November 1st: (The Fifth day of the Dead/All Saint's Day)

The war in Mexico City continues as the Garou of Mexico City perform the Rite of the Dead, ripping the wraiths in Mexico City away from the world of the living. The Sabbat population increases three-fold. The Garou of Mexico flee for their lives. The Technocracy calls in reinforcements. Samuel Haight arrives in Paraiso Vista and awakens Huitzilopochtli, a very old and very powerful Kindred. The Troupe attempts to stop Haight and they meet in final bloody combat.

November 2nd: Aftermath.

The war in Mexico City rages on, and the only clear victor is Pentex. The Troupe must deal with all that has happened, and must prepare for what is next.

to wreak havoc, especially if they are gullible enough to do favors for Haight.

While Haight has no true arguments with the Kindred, he certainly does not trust them. In his eyes, the only use for a vampire is as a source of Vitae to remain young and healthy. Haight's first run in with a Kindred began when one socked him in the back of the head and drained part of his blood away. Haight spent a few years as a witch-hunter before returning to his favorite prey, the Garou.

There is the possibility that a Kindred or two from Europe or Asia might well remember Samuel Haight less than fondly. Most Kindred are as likely to side with Haight as they are to side against him. Haight has done a few Kindred favors, and he has even been known to purchase Vitae at a reasonable price when in need of a quick fix. Haight is addicted to Kindred blood. Without it he could expect to age a good decade or more. The Skinner always has a supply available.

Haight has never feared the Kindred. He likely never will. Kindred, like the other supernaturals, are

merely pawns to be used and discarded. Haight is also wise enough to know which ones are likely to betray him.

Kindred from New Orleans likely have the best knowledge of where Haight can be found, but there might be a Gangrel or two out there that has taken the Skinner's killing of Garou personally. Any Kindred could ingratiate herself to Haight simply by volunteering to assist him in his actions, but he is not likely to trust a vampire he does not know. If the Kindred know any other supernaturals, especially Bone Gnawers, Orphans or Verbena, they could easily hear about Haight's plans through the grapevine.

Whatever the type of character, no one is likely to find the idea of Haight going to Mexico City — and possibly going after an Antediluvian — very comforting. Haight should at least be watched by the Kindred as much as possible.

One way or another, your Troupe should find their way into Mexico City just as the fun starts:



Timeline for October 28th

12:00 AM through 11:00 AM: The Troupe arrives in Mexico City.

12:01 PM: Buildings all over the city explode. Fires burn out of control and traffic is brought to a complete stop in most parts of the city.

12:15 PM: The Technocracy's forces are brought into play to discover the source of these explosions. The

Garou are believed responsible. An "unofficial" form of martial law is imposed during the state of emergency.

5:30 PM: Several explosions destroy all of the major power plants in Mexico City. The entire city is in a blackout.

6:35 PM: The Kindred of Mexico City awaken; many believe that the bombs were meant for them. They are not happy. Pentex begins their own investigations, suspecting Monkeywrenchers.

The night begins...



The Chaos Factor

Chapter One: Trail of Blood

*Fear not for your souls
For hate and power
Sing the song of immortality
The Dead Angel has come
Behold darkness and sorrow
In this empire*
— Liers in Wait, “Empire”

The first chapter of Samuel Haight's descent begins with the Troupe's arrival in Mexico City. Thanks to Haight, the city is quickly in an uproar. From this point,

the Troupe becomes caught in a race against time, with a thousand obstacles between themselves and their quarry.

Part One: Countdown to Extinction



*War, children,
It's just a shot away,
It's just a shot away...*

— Rolling Stones, “Gimme Shelter”

Day One: From his first moment in Mexico City, Haight's only goal is to locate the Methuselah called Huitzilopochtli. He believes the ancient Kindred is asleep within the ruins of an Aztec pyramid, as all of his evidence leads to a powerful source that controls the city.

He's also a little worried about the idea of waking the powerful creature, but his desire for immortality has long since won over his fear. The longer he lives, the more Garou die; that is all that really matters. Samuel Haight is a man with a mission, and he is very determined.

Haight knows that the odds are against him: the Technocracy and the Garou of Mexico City are guaranteed to oppose to his plans, and relationships between Haight and his previous employers, Pentex, are strained at best. Haight decides to even the odds by keeping every possible enemy busy looking at each other rather than at him.



The Diversion

Haight has several people in town with him, all of whom he has given special orders, and all of whom are more than glad to oblige the madman. Early in the morning of October 27, the minions of Samuel Haight plant explosives in a dozen separate sections of the city. At exactly 12:01 PM., October 28, the explosions rock the city. The Main Railway Station, the Monumento a la Revolucion, the Diego Rivera Museum, the Santo Tomas de Villanueva — Cortes Hotel — and the Templo de La Santisma, are all targeted for the bombs, as are a dozen Havens of the Kindred in Mexico City. While none of the explosions cause irreparable damage, they certainly catch the attention of the supernaturals in Mexico City.

The city goes a little crazy. After the recent attacks in southern Mexico and the threats of future violence, the Sleepers in the city are terrified. The worried Sabbat are looking for the responsible parties. Few mortals are actually injured in the explosions, but rumors that hundreds are dead spread through the city. The already incredible traffic problems in Mexico City are made worse by emergency vehicles blocking almost every major thoroughfare as the second wave of Haight's plan goes into action. From several parts of the city, and even from pay phones in the United States, the police in Mexico City — including special tactics teams led by Men in Black — are alerted to other spots where bombs are supposedly placed.

Blackout

The final insult comes when the major power plants for Mexico City are sabotaged, blown apart by the real bombs. As the sun sets, the Kindred awaken. The Sleepers of Mexico City are in an uproar, and the Kindred are seeking retribution from any and all possible attackers. The Bone Gnawers of the Sweet Water Sept engage in combat throughout the night, fighting off the Sabbat and dodging the Men in Black and HIT Marks that are released into the streets as riot control forces.

From the graveyards and haunts, the wraiths of the Orphaned Souls rise from Mictlan to gather their tribute in food and drink. Seeing the chaos that sweeps the city and the lack of tribute, the ghosts become enraged. Adding to the chaos, some wraiths seek to protect Sleepers whom they knew in life from the Kindred, the Technocracy and the Garou.

While the battles rage, Samuel Haight quietly slips into what should be Huitzilopochtli's Haven, only to find that it has apparently been abandoned. He finds a passage-way to the Wyrm's Underbelly and makes note of it, planning to return the following morning with reinforcements.

The Troupe could well encounter several enemies at the Storyteller's discretion. The trick here is to provide excitement without causing your Troupe serious damage. The tale has only begun.

- HIT Mark troops are on the streets, looking for trouble and especially for supernaturals. Iteration X wants the violence stopped before it can spread, and will certainly hunt down any unknowns in town, or any obvious supernaturals in sight. The Men in Black are attempting to investigate the explosions. These Men in Black will shoot first and ask questions later, should any of the characters rub them the wrong way.

- The Sabbat is furious. Someone, possibly Camarilla infiltrators, attempted to destroy their Havens while they were sleeping. Any unknown Kindred, Garou or mage is fair game.

- The Sweet Water Sept is not looking for trouble, but with the sort of night they're having, the sept is likely to attack anyone who comes too close without expressing a desire to talk. The obvious exception here are Garou who do not attack them immediately. These werewolves are the Troupe's best hope; they know the city and can provide some guidance in return for a little help. They have their own problems, however, and will not join the Troupe or act as cannon-fodder for them.

- Pentex is not sure just who has been blowing up the city, but they intend to make certain that they are not targeted. Several First Teams will be out and about near all Pentex buildings, ready to do battle with any and all potential enemies.

- Finally, there is the serious risk that the angry dead will look upon the Troupe and decide that they are to blame.

Timeline for October 29

Early Morning Hours, October 29: The Troupe possibly encounters the Sweet Water Sept, learning from Wanderer just where Haight is expected to show himself. Haight does show up, but early warnings from his assistants allow him to escape.

6:00 AM through 7:00 PM: The Technocracy's examination of the bomb sites lead them to believe that Tradition mages might be responsible for the explosions. The Kindred sleep in their Havens, fitfully at best. The Garou search in vain for Samuel Haight, who now enters the Underbelly of the Wyrm.

7:30 PM: The Troupe follows Samuel Haight into the Wyrmhole...?

The Scene for Mages:

Half an hour in the city and already everything was going straight to Hell. The air was thick with smoke from several fires that the locals still hadn't managed to contain, and the wraiths were bellowing enough to... well, enough to wake the dead. The howls of Garou could be heard in the distance, and as the sun had just set, it was inevitable that the damned vampires would want a piece of flesh for the damage done while they were sleeping. Grimm looked over to his left; Trina was looking away from

him, her motions nervous and jerky. She turned back to face him and her face was pale. "We've got company."

Grimm looked over her shoulder just as the HIT Marks came into view. Their stony expressions matched his own; the only difference was, that there were more sour looks aimed at him than he could return. Five of the bastards. Running looked like the best option.

Tradition mages and Orphans who come to Mexico City are likely chasing after the man responsible for slaughtering their own kind. Most of the mages will know at least a little about the Technocracy's stranglehold on Mexico City and most will use caution, the only wise option when in enemy territory. However, caution may do the mages

The First Day of the Dead: The Day of the Orphaned Souls

The Days of the Dead are a blending of Catholic beliefs and Aztec beliefs. The Catholic missionaries interwove their own concepts of All Hallow's Eve and All Saint's Day (which had evolved from earlier pagan holidays) with the already powerful beliefs in Mictlan, the land of the dead, and Mictlantecuhtli, the Aztec god of the dead. The Catholic missionaries altered their own beliefs enough to make them palatable to the Aztec peoples, a task that took surprisingly little effort. Over a few years' time, saints and demons joined the gods of the Aztecs in Mictlan, and the natives of Mexico accepted the change as easily as the masses accept having to pay taxes. While the Days of the Dead evolved separately from the celebration of Halloween, the two have merged to a very large extent in Mexico.

During the Days of the Dead, the fabric of reality between the realms of the living and the realms of the dead thins, allowing wraiths to move among the living world with more ease. Many of the wraiths simply visit their families, ascertaining that all is well. Many others do much more. The Days of the Dead are also a time for retribution against those who have wronged the dead, and a time to avenge slights against the wraiths' living relatives. What was originally only a time to celebrate the memory of the dead became a time to fear the dead and to defy them as well. Ridicule and tribute, along with prayer and feasting are all a part of the Days of the Dead.

The first Day of the Dead is a time to remember the Orphaned Dead, those with no family to remember them or pay tribute to them. Most families in Mexico will set food and drink outside of their homes for the Orphaned; in the smaller communities it is not uncommon to gather food from several families at the local church in the hopes that the Orphaned will not come into homes where they are not welcome. When the night is over, the Orphaned Dead should return to Mictlan, appeased for another year. Naturally, this is not always the case.

little good if they show up after noon on October 28th. The Technocracy mages are in an uproar; the city has been attacked and no one knows who is responsible. The Technocracy is on the lookout for any unknown mages, and for other types of Awakened as well. Any displays of vulgar magick in the area will bring down the Technocracy's wrath. HIT Marks and Men in Black are everywhere, seeking the cause of the city's troubles. They expect trouble and are ready to deal with any opponents who get in their way.

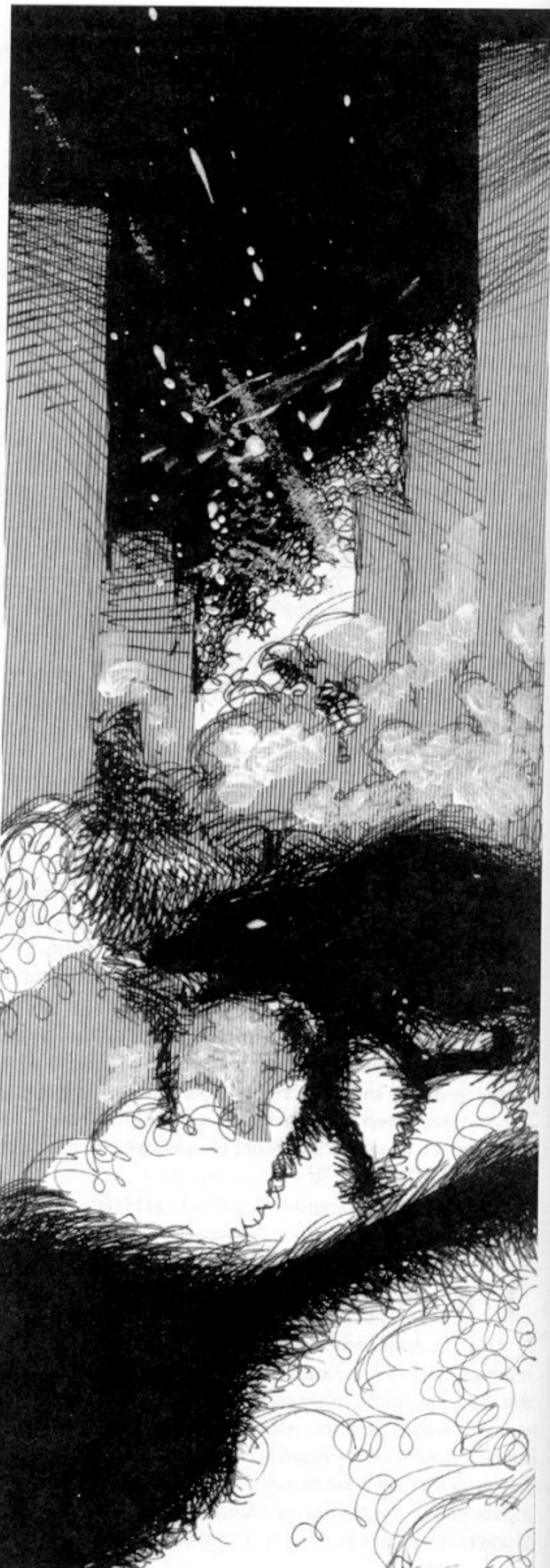
The Technocracy does not know just what to make of Pentex, but in Mexico City they leave the corporation and its workers alone. Pentex is the primary source of income for many residents, and the Mexican Technomancers are blind to the corporation's supernatural dealings. The Technocracy and Pentex have come to an understanding; both groups go out of their way to avoid conflict and even help each other from time to time. Any mages spotted by the fomori in Pentex' employ will be reported immediately, and trailed if possible.

The only safe action for a mage at this time is to keep his eyes open for trouble. Being spotted in action will only lead to disaster. Any mages found will be captured at best, or terminated with Extreme Prejudice. Absolutely no attempts to argue logically with the Technocracy will be effective at this time, unless the mage uses the Mind Sphere to get her point across.

The Troupe's primary goal is to catch up with Samuel Haight. The temptation to be led away from that goal is a potential hazard, especially for the Traditions that are strongly opposed to the destruction of nature. Conflicts rage around the Troupe, but the wise will not join these battles. The pursuit of Samuel Haight should take priority, especially with the Technocracy in a furor.

Locating Haight will be almost impossible on the first night. Seeking to find Haight through magick will be futile, as Haight's countermagick is extremely powerful while he possesses his staff. There are a few slim chances of finding Haight, the best being to locate one of his minions. The only accessible person in the know about Haight's plans is Mary Taylor, the Wanderer (see Book One, Chapter Two). Mary knows a great deal of Samuel Haight's plans, but there is little that she would willingly share. Mary is terrified of Haight, what the other Garou with her would think of her if they knew the truth about her past and, for that matter, her own shadow. She has suffered a complete nervous breakdown, and will probably run or attack (Storyteller's discretion) at the first sign of trouble.

Mary can tell the mages that Haight was looking for a secret passage near the pyramid of Huitzilopochtli, but she must be coerced to give up the knowledge. Again, use of the Mind Sphere is possible, but this risks both the Technocracy's notice and the Bone Gnawers' ire. Either option should be avoided if the cabal wishes to continue living.



The Scene for Technocracy Mages:

The Technocracy is well established in Mexico City. There is always a chance that the Troupe is located in the area or has been transferred there for a temporary assignment. For members of the Technocracy, the adventure begins with explosions rocking the building where their Construct is located. From there they must try to locate the source of the problems. They are likely to find more than they bargained for.

With or without werewolf player characters, you may rest assured that some Garou have entered the city, looking for Samuel Haight. Running across a wandering pack of Garou in the city is dangerous for two reasons: First, the pack is likely prepared for combat, and will be more than happy to tear apart a Wyrm-ridden mage or two. Second, these Garou are on a mission of great importance to their species. They are deadly and fast and generally don't like being interfered with.

The problem for visiting Technomancers is only increased by the strangeness of their Mexico City comrades. While the local Technomancers follow their Convention's beliefs, they are often a little too cruel for the liking; rather than simply following the logical process for examination of a subject, the Technocracy mages in Mexico City seem to gain a special pleasure from torturing them. Even by Technocracy standards, the Convention mages are cruel and uncaring.

The Scene for Garou

Barks-At-The-Moon was ready for anything. She knew the risks when she joined in the hunt for the Skinner, knew that her chances of survival were slim. Just the same, the very air around her stank so heavily of the Wyrm that she had trouble focusing. Even in Homid form she could feel the hairs on her neck standing on end.

It was even worse for City-Basher. The Red Talon beside her was almost foaming at the mouth. He kept snapping his jaws against the air, almost as if there were something that only he could see. Barks-At-The-Moon knew the problem; City-Basher hated the city, and this Scab was a hundred times worse than the ones he'd seen while living in Utah. A thick howling filled the air, but not the howling of Garou. The sound they heard was much worse, the sound of Leeches on a blood-hunt. There they were, not five or six, not even a full dozen. Barks-At-The-Moon felt her skin crawl as she called forth the Rage and transformed into Crinos... Sweet Gaia, there were twenty of the corpses coming their way....

The primary reason for visiting Mexico City is to find and destroy Samuel Haight, once and for all. The Wyrm is very strong in the city, and any Garou with the Gift Sense Wyrm is overwhelmed by the levels of corruption rampant in the area. Garou cannot Moon-Bridge into Mexico City;

the only caern in the entire city is held by the Black Spiral Dancers. This should be obvious before the pack even reaches its destination. A swift death or Wyrm-corruption are the only rewards for Garou attempting to force their way into the Underbelly of the Wyrm.

Pack members who have met Haight before have a slim chance (Tracking + Primal-Urge, difficulty 9) of locating his scent, but following his trail proves even more difficult. Haight has been using his knowledge of Correspondence to Co-Locate himself from place to place. His trail begins and then suddenly ends repeatedly.

The Garou must use caution to survive in Mexico City. Black Spiral Dancers dominate the city, always looking for new recruits or sacrifices for the Wyrm. The only allies in Mexico City at the present time are the Bone Gnawers of the Sweet Water Sept. The members of the sept are more aggressive than most Bone Gnawers, but are also very happy to see any Garou who have not fallen to the Wyrm. If asked, they will assist the pack, but they will ask for a favor in return. Four days hence, the Fifth Day of the Dead will be upon them, and the Gnawers request aid in their Ritual of the Dead—a ritual designed to force the dead into the next life, before the Wyrm's corruption can overtake them—a necessity in Mexico City. Whether or not the pack agrees, the Bone Gnawers will aid them, but the pack will find the help comes easier with a promise.

Mary Taylor, known only as Wanderer to the Bone Gnawers, is a false Garou, a Skin-Dancer (see Chapter Two for her statistics and the Appendix for details about the Skin Dancer tribe). Mary has some information about Samuel Haight, but she will only share the knowledge if she is forced to. Mary is not a very good actor, and an Alertness + Wits roll (difficulty 8) will allow pack members to see the way she jumps when Haight's name is mentioned. Manipulation + Enigmas (difficulty 7) is necessary to convince Mary to "spill the beans."

Mary knows that Haight is in pursuit of a powerful Leech, strong enough to make him virtually immortal. She knows that he is searching for the Leech's nest near the pyramid of Huitzilopochtli. That is all she can tell the pack. Mary Taylor does not register as Wyrm-corrupt. She will confess to being a Skin-Dancer if forced, and she will tell of her time in the Realm of cleansing, Erebus, of her flesh boiling away and of the Wyrm's influence being washed from her in the fiery waves of silver. She tells only the truth, and asks for mercy from the pack. What the pack decides to do is entirely in their own hands, but the Bone Gnawers are willing to fight to ensure Wanderer's safety; the sept's leader, Father Machete, states that she is free of the Wyrm and therefore worthy. The rest of the sept will follow his lead.

Techno-mages are powerful in Mexico City, and every violent action could lead to detection and destruction. The pack must be cautious if they are going to survive. The Bone

Gnawers have special Talens that may be used by the pack if the pack is found worthy, but gaining the full trust of the Sweet Water Sept is not easy. The Talens will only be granted with the approval of Father Machete.

The Leeches are stronger in this scab than in any other city on the continent, and they are often more blatant about attacking. Presently, they are also on the lookout for whatever has been bombing their Havens. Being found by the Sabbat Leeches all but guarantees a violent and painful death or, worse still, life as an Abomination for the truly unfortunate. The pack is grossly outnumbered, and the only hopes they have lie in befriending the Bone Gnawers or in being very, very careful.

The Scene for the Kindred

Blake looked over at Hendrix and wondered how it was that the Ventrue always seemed so calm. Blake felt anything but calm himself; walking into 200 of your least favorite Kindred was not a prospect that made him happy. There was no turning back from this crap either, not with so much at stake. Haight had to be stopped; wacking an Antediluvian was a very bad idea. There had to be something else they could offer; if it came down to the wire, Blake would offer to feed the kine's habit himself. Kine? No. Magi, or worse, mage-Lupine.

Hendrix reached into her purse and pulled a large caliber handgun from the small bag, a talent that Blake envied. Beside him, the blue hide of Terrier became visible briefly as he pointed to the alleyway nearby. They made the dubious cover just in time; the pack of scruffy looking Lupines shot right past them, baying loudly and swinging some nasty looking weapons.

Blake heard a slight gasp from Hendrix and turned towards her, even as the stake was driven through his chest. Beyond the fiery pain, he could see the black shapes that surrounded them. More Garou, only these Lupines looked even worse than the first group. They were crawling out of a manhole down the alley aways, and each was more deformed than the last. One of them spoke, his voice like thunder in a barrel: "Well, my friends, Pandemonium will be most pleased..."

Camarilla and Anarch Kindred

Mexico City is the very heart of Sabbat territory. Any way the Troupe examines the situation, there are still at least 30 Sabbat to each character. These are very bad odds. If the Troupe has entered the city with Samuel Haight, they should defend him at all costs, as he is their best chance for leaving the city alive. If members of the Troupe have Sabbat Lore, they could very well bluff their way out of the city using all of the right signals to convince the Sabbat Kindred that they are just "part of the gang."

If the Troupe is a group of Archons, or even worse, have the Fame Background, their troubles are even worse. The Sabbat try to maintain files on the Archons in the Camarilla's employ; while the files are hardly complete, there is a substantial chance that the Archons will be recognized if they have battled the Sabbat previously. Archons, like members of the Black Hand, are quick to gain reputations. Any Kindred in town who has not been in Mexico City for a good while is going to be open to suspicions, especially considering the explosions earlier in the day.

Again, the primary reason for being in the city is Samuel Haight; whether the Troupe wants to help him or hinder him, he is a significant part of the action. If the Troupe is with Haight, he will ask them to keep watch for any supernaturals who come along. If the Troupe is trying to find him, they could well run into serious trouble along those lines. The Troupe has no information sources in town, and will have to rely on their Disciplines to lead them to their target.

Sabbat Kindred

Chances are that the pack knows its way around Mexico City, or has at least met a few Kindred in the city. If the pack is with Haight, they could possibly convince him to do without the fireworks, provided they agree to play lookout for him. By the same token, the chances of Haight explaining himself in advance are slim. The pack must decide if they are willing to follow Haight, but for a chance to kill an ancient vampire, most would follow him eagerly; one down, twelve to go as it were.

Of all the different factions, the Sabbat Kindred have the easiest time in Mexico City — this is their home territory after all. Still, there are a few complications that the pack must deal with: the wandering Garou, several pissed off Tradition mages and the Technocracy come immediately to mind.

If the pack is against Haight, there is still the problem of gathering information on his whereabouts. Haight is difficult to find, especially when he is starting factional wars all through the city to slow down anyone in pursuit. Sabbat pack members with connections in town might find that Kindred who were friendly the last time they met have suddenly grown hostile. Several sites near Havens have been attacked, and most of the Sabbat in town are feeling hostile towards any potential enemies, other Sabbat members included.

Day Two: Into the Underworld



Deep beyond the shadows of oblivion
Chaos is about to overflow
Evil germinates beneath the homeland
A deadly seed which never ceased to grow.
Ruthlessly, the syndrome will infest the lives
Of thousands who shall try to overcome
But no one is immune to this catastrophe,
The dawn of doom has only just begun

— Demolition, "Prolegomenon/Matanza"

While all of the information necessary for running the Underbelly of the Wyrm is included in this sourcebook, Storytellers might want to also look at several other products from White Wolf: *The Book of the Wyrm*, for *Werewolf: The Apocalypse*; *The Sabbat Player's Handbook*, *Clanbook Nosferatu*, and *The Storyteller's Guide to the Sabbat* for *Vampire: The Masquerade*; *The Book of Chantries* and *The Book of Shadows* for *Mage: The Ascension*. While none of these books is absolutely necessary, all of them contain useful information on the denizens that inhabit the Underbelly of the Wyrm.

As the second Day of the Dead begins, the Troupe tries to hunt down Samuel Haight again, this time having better success. Haight is tracked back to the same place where he was seen the previous night, and this time he has gone beyond the exterior of the Pyramid and into the Underbelly of the Wyrm. While the paranoia increases above, Haight and the Troupe face the dangers of a Nosferatu *antitribu* Warren, Black Spiral Dancer Hive and Nephandi Labyrinth combined. The Dead of Mexico City have plans in the area as well; many are on a task of vengeance against the minions of the Underbelly. Many are mad with pain and don't care who they hurt as long as someone shares their suffering.

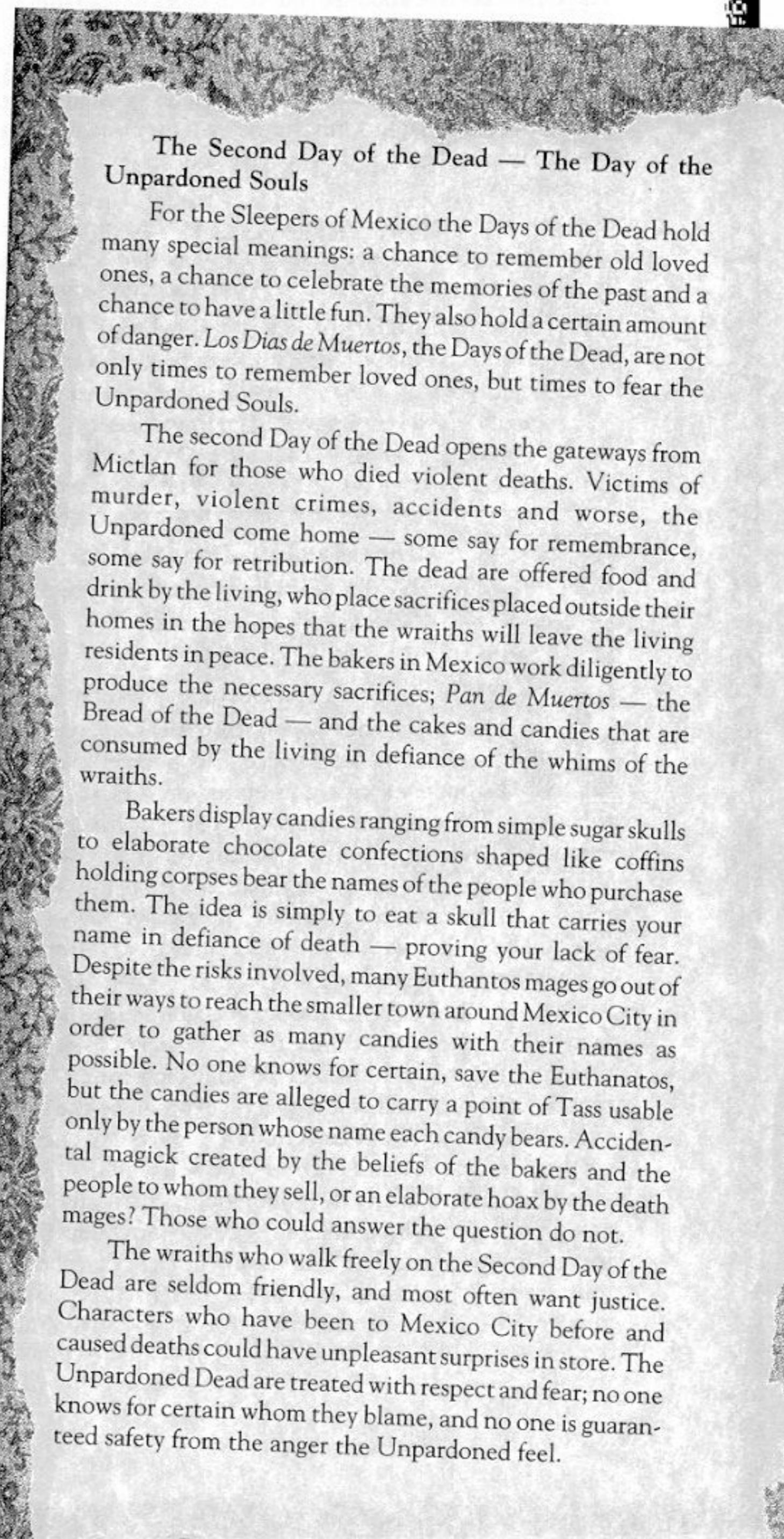
Pandemonium

The stench was almost unbearable, a ripe combination of rotting flesh, raw sewage and something far, far, worse. Most of the group breathed through their mouths, trying to avoid the smell, but the coating on their tongues tasted like a rotten corpse must taste. The walls were slick with a dark mucus, and no one would have been surprised to see teeth up ahead. Enormous razor-sharp teeth, with bits of shredded flesh and long strings of gristle wedged in the crevices between.

It was almost a relief to step from the steeply sloping tunnel and onto solid earth again. The cavern was dark, illuminated by a diseased glow that only hinted at what lay beyond. Perhaps that was for the best. The darkness moved, just beyond the edge of their vision, and everyone turned to see what they could.

Thrusting from the dessicated ruins of a magnificent pyramid, a bloated thing slobbered and shifted. The black shape made sounds, some like a scream of pain, others like the beating of a

diseased heart. The pyramid's remains were intimidating enough, but the mass that grew from its insides was terrifying, almost impossible to take in with only one glance. Someone whispered softly in the darkness, a sound that was one part disbelief and two parts terrified awe: "God help us all... I think it's alive." As if to prove the voice's point, the thing moved again, long rubbery tendrils sliding from its sides and worming blindly towards them.



The Second Day of the Dead — The Day of the Unpardoned Souls

For the Sleepers of Mexico the Days of the Dead hold many special meanings: a chance to remember old loved ones, a chance to celebrate the memories of the past and a chance to have a little fun. They also hold a certain amount of danger. *Los Dias de Muertos*, the Days of the Dead, are not only times to remember loved ones, but times to fear the Unpardoned Souls.

The second Day of the Dead opens the gateways from Mictlan for those who died violent deaths. Victims of murder, violent crimes, accidents and worse, the Unpardoned come home — some say for remembrance, some say for retribution. The dead are offered food and drink by the living, who place sacrifices placed outside their homes in the hopes that the wraiths will leave the living residents in peace. The bakers in Mexico work diligently to produce the necessary sacrifices; *Pan de Muertos* — the Bread of the Dead — and the cakes and candies that are consumed by the living in defiance of the whims of the wraiths.

Bakers display candies ranging from simple sugar skulls to elaborate chocolate confections shaped like coffins holding corpses bear the names of the people who purchase them. The idea is simply to eat a skull that carries your name in defiance of death — proving your lack of fear. Despite the risks involved, many Euthanatos mages go out of their ways to reach the smaller town around Mexico City in order to gather as many candies with their names as possible. No one knows for certain, save the Euthanatos, but the candies are alleged to carry a point of Tass usable only by the person whose name each candy bears. Accidental magick created by the beliefs of the bakers and the people to whom they sell, or an elaborate hoax by the death mages? Those who could answer the question do not.

The wraiths who walk freely on the Second Day of the Dead are seldom friendly, and most often want justice. Characters who have been to Mexico City before and caused deaths could have unpleasant surprises in store. The Unpardoned Dead are treated with respect and fear; no one knows for certain whom they blame, and no one is guaranteed safety from the anger the Unpardoned feel.

At its base, unaffected by the creature's presence, they could just see Samuel Haight sliding under the monster's bulk and into the pyramid's remains...

Haight waits for the sun to set before beginning his trek on the second day. The Kindred are just awakening, and the mages and Garou are likely growing impatient. Attempts to find Haight during the daylight hours prove futile. While the Troupe first locates and then tracks down Samuel Haight, he busies himself by chasing down the Haven of Huitzilopochtli. Haight discovers that the true Haven has been abandoned, but finds clues to lead him to the new location... or so he thinks.

In truth, Haight has missed a very important clue that could allow the Troupe to turn the tables on him completely by setting a trap. Only, however, if they find the clue themselves, and only if they survive the descent into the Underbelly.

Samuel Haight has assumed that someone *might* come after him, but has no idea that someone has, indeed, been in pursuit. He is working on a very different time schedule than the Troupe, especially the Kindred, and is nearing

exhaustion. This does not mean he won't fight; Haight is entering a vile place, and is prepared for the worst.

The Troupe should realize just what they are getting themselves into from the first. The Underbelly is a dangerous place where madness and violence are a part of everyday life. They are also entering an area that is literally unknown to the city above. If the Troupe has made any useful connections, they could well gather reinforcements for this very dangerous task. The least of their worries in the Underbelly is Samuel Haight. Samuel might want their skins, or their power, but the minions of the Underbelly want their very souls.

The Underbelly is full of early warning systems as protection against interference. No one will get in or out without being noticed. The residents, however, have come to accept occasional intrusions by homeless mortals or wandering animals. Unless the Troupe comes in with guns blazing, the Underbelly's minions will be slow to respond.

The Underbelly



*There once was good blood in the breeze here
We rode across the lake each new year
What have I remembered
What did this used to be*

— Crash Test Dummies, "Winter Song"

A general overview of the Underbelly is given in the Mexico City sourcebook, but more extensive examination is essential for

this scene. The entrance that Samuel Haight has located enters the Underbelly proper near the very center of the Wyrm-Haven, only a few hundred feet from the actual ruins of Huitzilopochtli's pyramid. The passageway to the Underbelly is slick with an oily substance that glistens in the near total darkness.

The smell of decay is strong, but a close look at the material on the walls shows that it is *alive*, a protein substance that coats the tunnel like saliva in a throat. This substance is fairly mild, but long term exposure to the stuff works as the Bane Power **Infectious Touch**. Small chemical changes will start to occur within a few hours if left untreated. The Underbelly is illuminated naturally by a pale green light coming from many of the fungi that grow in the enormous area. The light is faint; all sight Perception rolls are made against difficulty 8, although Gifts, Disciplines and magick can all compensate for the unholy darkness.

The pyramid of Huitzilopochtli once stood over 600 feet tall; now the growth atop it is twice that size. The pyramid has ruptured and fragmented, making way for the Pandemonium that has erupted from its bowels to grow more powerful. The Pandemonium is alive; the black hide of the thing pulses, and artery-like passages just under the skin boil with heat as the putrescence used as blood by the Pandemonium runs its course.

Odd things, mindless servitors of the Pandemonium crawl and slither, maggot-like, over the entire growth, making repairs and preparing for new growth spurts. The ground around the Pandemonium is spongy with toxic wastes and human remains. Lichen grow in the ground and move of their own volition. The bodies of countless thousands lie at the base of the pyramid, some mere skeletons and some still bleeding. Perhaps the worst of all is that many of the bodies still move, slowly pulled back into the Pandemonium as fuel for growth. The stench is overpowering; a roll (difficulty determined by the individual's personal experiences) is required to continue. Failure means that a Willpower point must be spent to continue, and a Botch means fleeing as quickly as possible (fear frenzy for Kindred, fox frenzy for Garou) for the surface world.

Haight has already entered the pyramid, crawling under the Pandemonium, through one of the pyramid's cracked walls when the Troupe arrives. He escapes into it just ahead of them.



The Scene for Tradition Mages:

Tradition mages have a few advantages in this scene, especially those with Correspondence, Life, Spirit and Time. Correspondence allows characters to move about with much greater ease, and to Co-Locate away from the problem areas, to sense what lies far below in the depths of the Underbelly and to run away. Life allows the characters to sense life in the area and possibly notice a few things that would otherwise be ignored. Spirit allows the characters to know just what sort of Banes are below. Using this simple talent may cause a character to expend Willpower if the character wishes to proceed beyond this point (Storyteller's discretion). Time could allow characters advanced warnings on some of the nastier surprises below; for a truly terrifying experience, simply tell the character that all they see is shapes moving in the darkness, as that really is all they will be able to see without magickal assistance.

Any use of the Spheres is also likely to notify the Guardians of the area, the Men in Black *barabbi*. Nosferatu's Obfuscate Discipline is unaffected by Sense Life. A hidden Nosferatu is simply ignored, so even a scan for life patterns is not a guarantee that the mage will see a Nosferatu who does not wish to be noticed. The Forces Rote Veil of Invisibility works in much the same way, and is just as effective against the minions of the Wyrm.

It would be easy for characters to reach false conclusions, especially at the appearance of the Men in Black *barabbi*. The Storyteller should make very clear that the MIBs are no longer with the Technocracy; while they look the same, there is an air about them — the way they move and the way they speak — that is decidedly *wrong*. One good look at the Pandemonium should clear up any misconceptions. This obscenity can only be the work of Nephandi.

Any commotion raised alerts Samuel Haight of his danger and spurs him to leave faster than he would like. The odds are too overwhelming for him and he runs while he can.

The Scene for Technocracy Mages:

This scene runs much like the scene above, but the characters have a better chance of reaching what they are after. Corrupt or not, the Technocracy will destroy the Underbelly if they find out that it exists. Full Technocracy assault battalions can be employed in a matter of only a few minutes, should the Troupe agree that an emergency call is in order. The battle would be epic, but the Technocracy would win in the long run.

Any chance of finding the clues left behind by Samuel Haight would be lost if the Technocracy assault teams were called in. The only hope would be to use the Time Spheres

to find out what Samuel Haight discovered. Some might be tempted to believe that Haight is dead, destroyed in the battle. Smarter characters will know better. There will be no body as evidence.

The Troupe may decide to go without the help. In that case they are captured if possible or killed if resistance is too harsh. If captured, they experience the wonders of the Caul, which transforms them into *barabbi* servitors unless they are rescued quickly.

The Scene for Garou

Samuel Haight returns to where he was last spotted the night before. He is easily tracked from there to the entrance of a Wyrmhole. Garou following Samuel Haight must enter a stronghold of the enemy. Tracking Haight through the Underbelly is not easy; again, he is using his mage powers to move quickly and to avoid detection; long stretches can pass without any indication that Haight has come this way. Once entering the Underbelly proper, any Garou employing the Gift Sense Wyrm is overwhelmed by the Wyrm's corruption in this area. Black Spiral Dancers walk in plain sight, and any noticing the pack are likely to attack without question.

If the pack uses stealth and caution, they can make their way to the pyramid without much trouble. Any failures or Botches allow the Black Spiral Dancers a chance to notice the pack (Perception + Alertness difficulty 7 on a failure, difficulty 5 on a Botch). If the pack is spotted, the Black Spiral Dancers call out the rest of the Hive and attack. The Dancers attempt to overpower the packmembers and drag them to Malfeas to dance the Black Spiral (see *Book of the Wyrm* for more details). If capture is not an option, the Dancers will simply kill and consume the pack. The Bone Gnawers above do not offer help, nor do they agree to assist the pack if asked; the Bone Gnawers are alive because they use their brains, not because they are suicidal. Posthumously awarded Renown does not interest them.

Caught!

When the Pandemonium notices a character, it grabs harshly with pseudopods that erupt from its surface. The limbs have the following characteristics: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 3. The tendrils normally come forth from the main body in groups of six, but more are produced as needed. Any attacks against the Pandemonium bring forth the Men In Black *barabbi* and send a shudder through the entire mass. The living entity immediately alerts the Nephandi and Black Spiral Dancers upon being attacked.

Any member of the Troupe, excluding Sabbat, captured by the Pandemonium appears to be consumed by a formless maw in two turns unless she can break away; in truth, the character is pulled into a chamber and sedated with thick fluids forced into the body by needle-like appendages. The Gift Resist Toxin negates the poisons, and the damage can be soaked. The toxin is not fatal. Mages must use vulgar magick to defend against the poisons, while Kindred are completely unaffected.

The captured character is not defenseless, and quick thinking or even quick attacks can stop the Pandemonium from doing any permanent harm. The Troupe may decide that the character is dead, but the Storyteller should point out that a struggle can be seen from the exterior of the Pandemonium. Be imaginative, and be certain not to give too much detail; leave the players wondering just what the hell is going on in there.

If the Troupe leaves the player on her own, a new Black Spiral Dancer, Kindred on the Path of Evil Revelations, corrupted werecreature or Nephandi mage will likely remember the lack of assistance when the rebirth is finished several hours later. While unlikely, even at this point the possibility still exists that the character could be saved; certain Gifts, Disciplines and rotes could repair the damage done (Consult the various rulebooks).

The Scene for Anarch and Camarilla Kindred

All Kindred suffer from their delay in rising for the evening. Haight has a substantial lead over them and he uses that lead to his advantage. Entering the Underbelly is a dangerous task, especially for non-Sabbat Kindred. Infernal Kindred in the area are dangerous alone, but with the added help of the Nephandi mages and the Black Spiral Dancer Garou, they are almost unstoppable. *Obfuscate* is a must for survival, and even that is no guarantee. If the players don't want to risk their characters, don't force them. But remind them that for all they know the very founder of a Clan is down there in Torpor, and whether they want to help or consume the Methuselah, the only way to locate the Third Generation Kindred is down there, where Samuel Haight has already gone.

If captured, the Kindred will be set aside to be Diablerized or Blood Bound. If Blood Bound, the Troupe is forced to follow the Path of Evil Revelations or, worse still, is sacrificed to Ba'al.

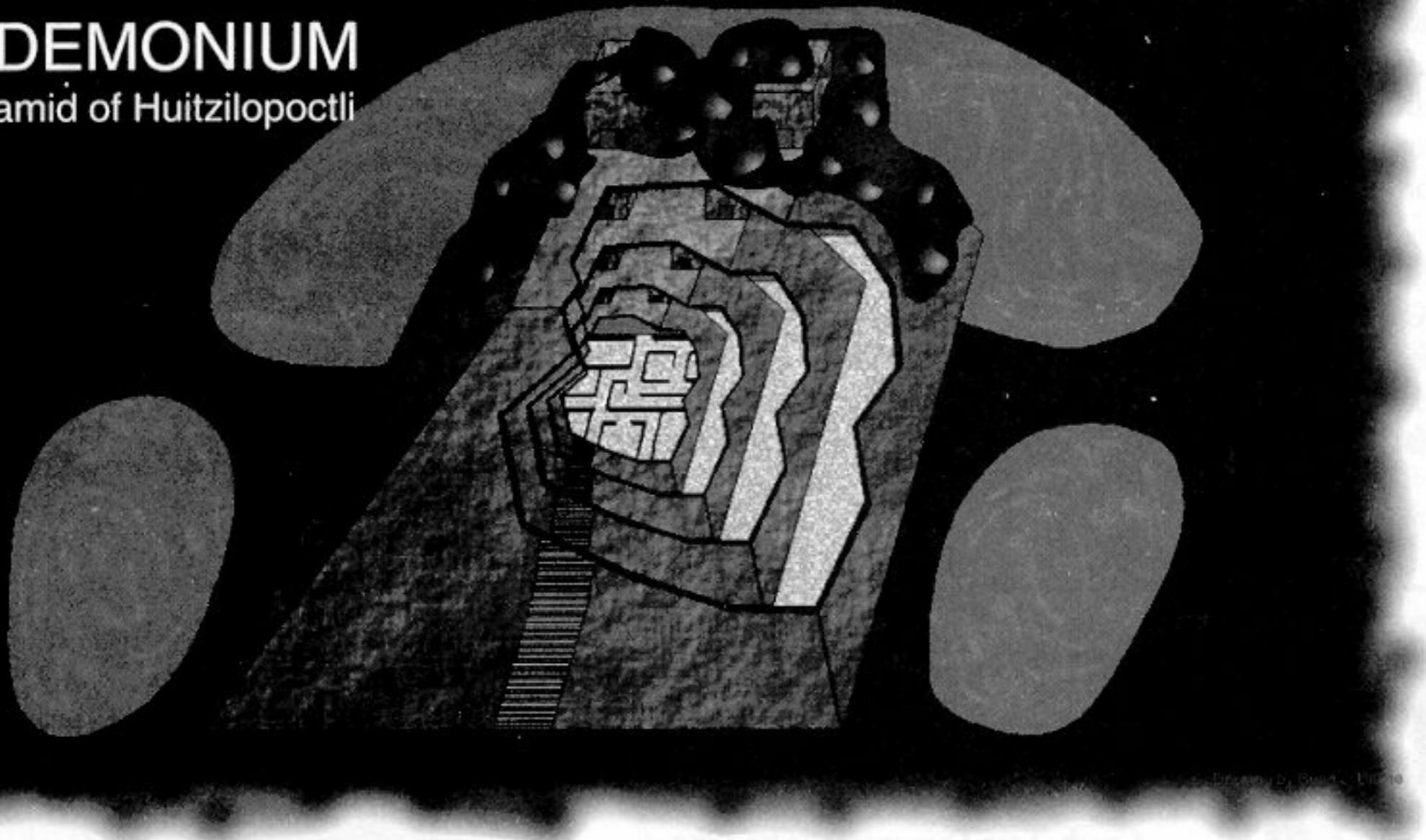
The Scene for Sabbat Kindred:

The pack will have to watch themselves very carefully. The Nosferatu in the Underbelly want their blood, their souls, or both. Unless the pack knows the guidelines for the Path of Evil Revelations, they will be Diablerized or converted as described. The one advantage is that the pack might well call for reinforcements from above. The problem there is that a substantial number of the Sabbat Kindred in Mexico City follow the Path of Evil Revelations already. Just whom can they trust? None of the Sabbat above will aid the pack without very good reason.

If the Troupe is noticed, and battles break out, Samuel Haight beats a hasty retreat. Haight believes he has what he was looking for, and will not wait around fight. He has more important matters to handle.

PANDEMONIUM

The Pyramid of Huitzilopochtli



Scene Two: Into the Pandemonium



The wounds on Grimm's arms burned, and he felt his flayed flesh with every move. Still, the Skinner was up ahead, and they had to go on. If the cabal hadn't run across the Garou that were with them now, they'd have never stood a chance. Fate was being kind, and that made Grimm nervous. There was always a balance. Up ahead of him, Trina leaned against the wall, resting for a second as she waited.

"Trina, we can't stop now." His voice was only a whisper, still the werewolves behind him made shushing noises. Grimm looked at Trina. She looked back at him, but instead of her characteristic annoyance, her features showed only pain and fear.

"Oh shit." He looked closely at Trina, at the black mass from above her that had glued itself to the back of her head. "Oh shit," he repeated, "Trina... I thought they were only shadows." His apology sounded so weak, so ineffectual. He watched as the black tendrils wrapped completely around her face, lifting her into the air. Finally, she screamed...

Crawling through the small entrance that Haight used is the only way to avoid the Pandemonium, and even that is not a guarantee of safety. The Pandemonium is a living entity, and is always hungry for more knowledge and power. The Troupe must use caution and skill to avoid contact with the malignant thing above and around them. Contact with the Pandemonium's cold flesh is unsettling at best, and exceedingly dangerous at worst.

The Pandemonium moves slowly, shifting and pouring through the cracks and crevices like honey on a hot

summer's day. The "skin" on the Pandemonium glistens with a foul excretion that, in reality, functions as the eyes on the creature. The Pandemonium "sees" everything that comes in contact with its body, and senses whether or not the new creature is corrupted enough to pass freely. Haight was deemed suitably twisted, and most Sabbat fall into the same category. Most Garou and Awakened do not. Contact with the plasmic mass must be avoided at any cost, and Garou will sense this instinctively. The Storyteller should clearly emphasize that the syrupy mass is moving, and is reaching outward, questing for contact.

To successfully navigate the corridor of Huitzilipochtli's Pyramid and reach his ancient Haven requires 15 cumulative successes with a Dexterity + Dodge roll, difficulty 5. A failure means only a delay while waiting for the dripping mass to move enough to permit passage. A Botch means that the character has been noticed as something more than debris.

Beyond the Pandemonium

Once past the long hallway, a chamber that has never been touched by the Pandemonium lies in wait. The chamber is narrow and shallow, only a dozen feet across and five feet in height. This is where Huitzilopochtli spent several centuries in Torpor. Haight has already abandoned the area, but clues that he was there are evident. The thick dust that covers most of the floor is scuffed; thick clouds of

the dust still move sluggishly in the stagnant air. Several scrolls, yellowed with age and brittle to the touch, lie on the ground. The papers have been recently handled, and have suffered minor damage. A Perception + Alertness Roll (difficulty 7) reveals a small collection of papers that have not been touched, hidden beneath a small stone table in the corner.

These papers, written in archaic Spanish, reveal the true location of Huitzilopochtli. The ancient Kindred moved from the Haven where the characters stand in 1978, to a new Haven in the mountains beyond Mexico City near a town named *Paraiso Vista* — View of Paradise. Samuel Haight has not seen these papers.

The scrolls that Haight has seen will lead him in another direction, across the oceans to the land of Jordan, to a small city hidden from the Sleepers: Petra in the Valley of Kings — home to a powerful being, rumored to be a mage, a mummy, a vampire, or something worse. Those familiar with Jordan should be afraid to go there; madness and death always follow the Awakened who enter Jordan.

The evidence says that Samuel Haight has gone to Jordan, specifically to Petra. Will the Troupe follow him? If so, move on to Chapter Two. Will they stay behind and wait for his return? Or Does the Troupe dare go on before him to Paraiso Vista? Whatever the answer, read on, and rest assured that chaos lies in the near future.

Part Two: Vacation



*There are nights
When the wind comes howling through my old place
I have dreams
And I wake up with the sweat pouring down my face
And I wait till the morning comes*

— Crash Test Dummies, “The Ghosts That Haunt Me”

The second part of “The Chaos Factor” deals with visiting Jordan and the legendary city of Petra. To properly work out all of the details in Petra and Jordan, the Storyteller should take the time to look over *A World of Darkness*, the initial world sourcebook for the Storyteller System. Details that are not given in this book, due to space limitations, are handled in *A World of Darkness*. All truly pertinent points are covered in this chapter, but a more in-depth look could make for a more interesting Vacation.

Plot

In Vacation, the Troupe must try to find Samuel Haight before he awakens something best left undisturbed. Haight is obsessed with locating Huitzilopochtli, and he believes that his target is in Petra, a heavily armed section of Jordan that few even know exists. Haight doesn’t waste any time — he immediately moves off to locate the ancient Kindred.

What has gone before: Haight Co-locates to Jordan and from there follows the clues he found in the one scroll he did not leave behind. He has information that the Troupe is not privy to, and uses that information to get a substantial head start on the characters. This side trip was not in Haight’s original plans, and he is without his normal array of back up. This does not mean he is helpless.

Timeline for October 30

- 6:00 AM: Haight Arrives in Jordan.
- 7:30 AM: Haight leaves Jordan.

Scene One: Passage to Jordan

The chances are good that the Troupe will look briefly at the scrolls and then make up their minds about whether or not to follow Samuel Haight to Jordan. If the Troupe has not specifically taken a few days — time they do not have — to look over the documents, then most would assume they could have missed a few details. The Marauders take advantage of this problem, “coincidentally” adding a cryptic description that leads the Troupe not to Petra, but to the Tower of Al Durab, a Chantry ruled by the Korratal, a Hermetic Chantry that does not recognize the Traditions. The Troupe find a less than friendly reception waiting for them.

Scene Two: “You Want Us to Attack Who?”

The Troupe arrives in Petra too late to capture Haight, primarily because Haight never made it all the way there. While the Troupe is dealing with the Korratal Chantry, unknown forces turn Haight away from Petra and lead him to back to Mexico City. Haight has been shown the error of his ways and returned to Mexico City, from there to move on in pursuit of his goal in Paraiso Vista. Meanwhile, the Troupe, should they decide to follow Haight to Petra, must deal with Talaq, a powerful minion in the World of Darkness, and the true Prince of Jordan. The Settites and the Assamites are both watching and waiting, and many options make themselves known.

What is Really Going On

Unknown to Haight and to the Troupe, Haight is getting help from another source: the Marauders. Three Mexican Marauders (see Chapter Two) have decided to help Haight for their own twisted reasons; Haight has already caused substantial damage to the Technocracy of Mexico City. He is a chaotic force that causes violent change wherever he goes. The Marauders are watching Haight closely, even considering him for possible recruit-



ment. While the Troupe stalks Haight, the Marauders do their best to stop the Troupe in typical Marauder fashion.

Scene One: Passage to Jordan



The sands spread forward for as far as the eyes could see, undistinguishable from anything else in the area. The night was clear, and that was a bonus. Everyone was tired already, but really, what could anyone do save go on? Haight had to be stopped. There could be no mercy for him, especially not after the way some had died in the Underbelly.

Eventually, after consulting the maps and a compass, they all agreed to head west. The fine sands beneath their feet were almost impossible to walk on, but just solid enough to make sinking a minimal risk. They walked for what seemed like hours; everyone was too tired to speak, save to discuss what could be done to stop the madman somewhere ahead of them.

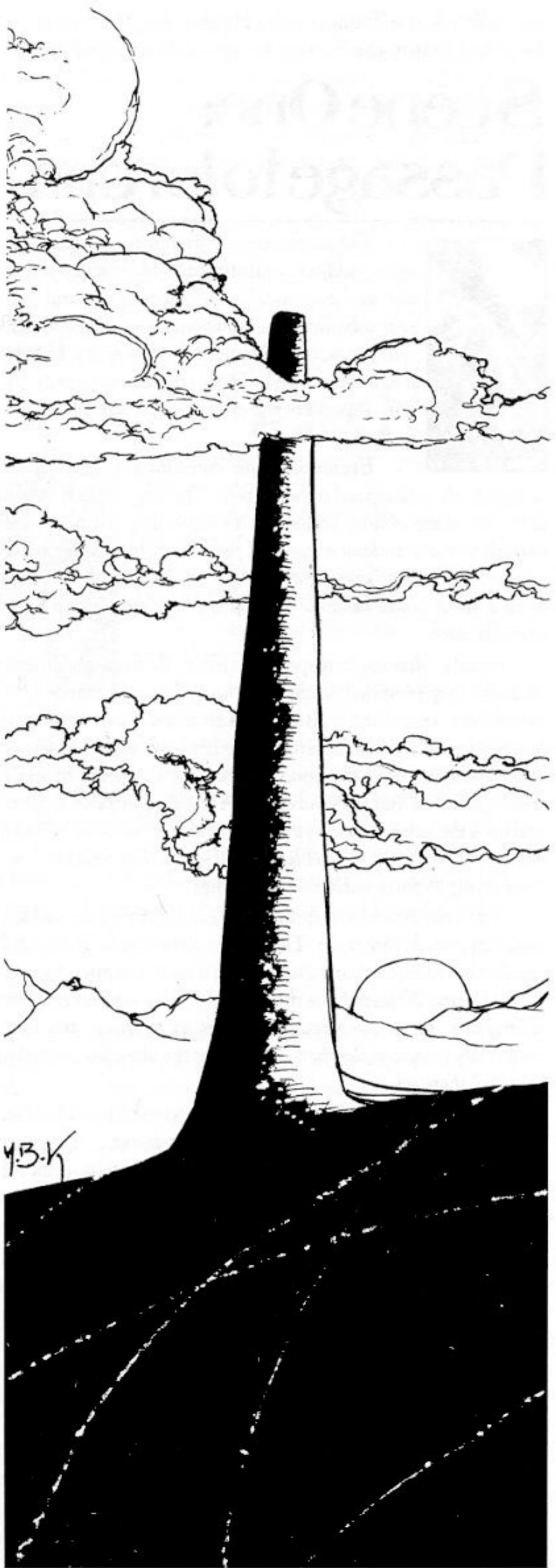
Finally, after too long spent in pursuit, they saw the distant shape the map promised up ahead of them. The tower thrust high into the air; even from a distance, even when it was still just a faint image, they could see how tall the structure was. The winds started blowing, and everyone was glad for the gentle breeze's cooling touch. Until the sand came. A few tiny particles at first, and then the sting of dust in the eyes, and then the taste of sand in their mouths. The winds blew harshly, and they could feel the sand trying to force itself into their lungs.

Then the distant tower disappeared, hidden by the sudden wall that grew before them. The barrier continued to grow, and finally they realized their mistake. Not a wall, a wave. A wave of sand rising 20 feet above their heads. There was no time for calling out, the moving mountain was upon them, and they could only pray to make their way free as the ultra fine particles engulfed them all...

Getting There: The trip from Mexico City to Jordan is substantial, particularly by mundane means; it is also close to impossible for Kindred to make the trip. Samuel Haight co-locates himself to Jordan, and if the Troupe chooses to follow, they run across a potential snag. Mages adept in the use of the Correspondence Sphere could save everyone a great deal of time, but doing so would require vulgar magick.

There are several other problems inherent in such action, not the least of which is sunlight, or more importantly the strong allergy most Kindred have to sunlight. Jordan is on the other side of the world from Mexico City... nighttime here means daytime there. Kindred player characters are likely to take being thrown into the fire very poorly.

Garou are another matter entirely; most Garou could actually make the journey themselves with a Moon-Bridge,



but only part of the way. Jordan has no Moon-Bridges, and the closest accessible bridge, the Wheel of Ptah (see *Caerns: Places of Power*), would still leave the werewolves several hundred miles from their destination. Then again, the only caern in Mexico City belongs to the Wyrm...

Kindred on their own would be forced to take public transportation to Jordan, and that requires passports, a flight that does not extend into the daylight hours, and a delay that would give Haight too large a head start. Better perhaps to wait behind, in the hopes that Haight will return. Or perhaps a visit to Paraiso Vista is order...

Jordan

Jordan is a land of mystery to most of the Awakened in the World of Darkness: Garou seldom go there, mages find the place uncomfortable, and most Kindred who drop in unexpectedly tend never to leave. The Silent Striders at the Wheel of Ptah Caern claim the land drives people insane. Some Kindred claim that the Settites are responsible; others believe that mages are at fault. Some mages believe that Jordan suffers from Marauder influences. All of these groups are right. And wrong.

The more knowledgeable among the supernaturals believe that Petra houses something so powerful that its influence is felt throughout all of Jordan and many parts of the Middle East. No one is certain just what lies hidden within the depths of the stronghold, but whatever it is apparently can drive people insane. The Marauders are known to break into the physical world around Jordan frequently, but no solid connection to Petra has been made, despite rumors to the contrary. The Settites do indeed make their presence known from time to time, as do the Assamites. But no one with any real knowledge believes that they are responsible for the field of madness that sweeps over the entire area. There is a powerful Chantry of mages believed to exist in the desert, but only a few are certain exactly where it rests, and no one has heard from the mages there in over 50 years. The assumptions are many and varied; the known facts are few.

Upon entering Jordan from whatever access, the Troupe can follow the clues left behind straight to the hidden city of Petra — well, they only wish. The clues that the Troupe have in their hands lead them only to the Tower of Al Durab. Al Durab is almost four hours away from anything of significance, and even if the Troupe can co-locate to their destination, they soon find themselves in a blinding and painful sand storm. The sand and powerful winds are really only an inconvenience, unless the Troupe continues on towards the Tower. The Tower can be seen from where the sand storm is active (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 8), but only as a dark shape against the sky.

The winds increase in velocity and the sands start causing pain if the Troupe continues. Normal defenses apply against the sand storm, but if the Troupe continues on foot for more than two turns, the sands start to move in waves across the

desert's floor. The moving dunes are capable of burying the entire Troupe in only one round, and are not easy to notice in advance (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 7). Once buried, the characters have to force their way out from under the sand and try to continue on. Magick, Gifts and Disciplines are probably the only option for staying alive, and the sand is so fine that Storytellers should use the drowning rules in *Werewolf* and *Mage* as if the characters were drowning in water not in sand.

Ironically, any use of True Magick (not Gifts, Thaumaturgy or Disciplines) stops the sand storm immediately; the Chantry's defenses were never meant to cause harm to other mages.

The next problem is simply getting inside the Chantry, which the Troupe may still believe is Petra. Huge iron doors block the entrance; the doors are very sturdy (Strength of 10 to force the doors open) and are barred from the inside. Gifts, Disciplines and magick can still force the door. The mildly foolhardy could simply try knocking. The door will be opened by the two golems on the other side, accompanied by a mage.

The Tower of Al Durab

*Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,
Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide
Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"
And — "A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.*

— *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, Verse XXXIII*

The Tower of Al Durab is more legend than reality in the World of Darkness, and that is just as the Awakened who study there prefer it. The people of Jordan occasionally talk of seeing the Tower just before a blistering sand storm tears their sight away; often these sand storms seem to appear from nowhere, leaving the people who have seen the Tower buried under tons of sand, or miles away from where they thought they were.

Most who have seen the Tower describe it as a small marble needle thrusting towards the sky, but some have been awestruck by its unnatural size, claiming that the tower is as large as all of Mecca. Those who make the latter claim also state matter-of-factly that the Tower is made of black stone and gold, but few people ever believe such claims.

The Tower is real, and both descriptions are accurate. The Tower changes shape almost constantly, sometimes appearing as little more than a hut and other times appearing as a massive fortress. The Tower of Al Durab holds a powerful cabal of vaguely Hermetic mages, or, more precisely, followers of the Kabbalah — mages named for the powerful tomes they study and revere as the one truth. This cabal has little to do with the outside world, primarily because they suffer from a odd form of insanity. The mages of Al Durab have dedicated themselves to understanding the Kabbalah, completely ignoring the world beyond their Chantry's walls.

The mages are isolationists, and want nothing to do with a world that has lost its perspective in the quest for Ascension. There are no young members of the Chantry, nor has a new member joined them in over 400 years. Every single mage in the Chantry is a Master of their magicks, and a few are believed to have reached Oracle status.

Nodes

There are several Nodes of the Tower of Al Durab in places around the world, but most are in the Middle East. Mages familiar with the bygone Ahl-i-Batin may speculate that remains of the Web of Faith feed the Tower. Places where the Israeli faith is strongest normally hold Nodes to the Tower of Al Durab. Some even claim that a Node of the Chantry exists in Eden.

The Horizon Realm

The Tower's Realm is a massive sprawling library dedicated to the Kabbalah. The only inhabitants of this Realm are the mages themselves and at least 30 golems that defend the library from intruders and deliver parchments for research to the different mages upon their requests. No sound above a whisper is ever heard in the Horizon Realm. No one outside the Chantry is ever willingly permitted into the Library. There are no exceptions.

Purpose

The entire reason for the Chantry's existence is the pursuit of knowledge about the Kabbalah. Nothing else matters.

History

Long ago, further back than most of recorded history, the Tower of Al Durab became a study house for the Kabbalah. For centuries, outside mages were permitted to come and study magick in the Chantry. In its heyday, the Tower was second only to Doissetep as a place of learning. As the years passed, the mages of Al Durab started turning away the mages who came for information and teaching. They wanted nothing to do with the Ascension War, the Technocracy or the Council of Nine. The only exceptions the masters permitted were mages who wished to explore the mystic Kabbalah. In this day and age, most mages believe that the Tower of Al Durab is a legend, long ago destroyed by alien forces. That is how the Chantry wants it. No one has visited the Tower in over 200 years, and only seldom has a mage of the Tower left for any reason.

Internal Relations: The inhabitants of the Tower of Al Durab agree on the only important aspect of their lives; the Kabbalah must be understood. Nothing else matters — the Kabbalah is all. As a result of this philosophy, the mages of Al Durab seldom argue.

External Relations: There are no external relations with the Tower of Al Durab. The foolhardy who come too close are driven away by sand storms. The persistent are

attacked by the golems unless they are among the Awakened. Members of the Awakened are greeted formally and tersely by the Chantry's mages and politely asked to leave — unless they seek knowledge of the Kabbalah, in which case they are greeted as long lost friends until they start on another subject, at which point they are politely asked to leave. Those who wish to stay and bother the mages of Al Durab find themselves at the mercy of angry Masters.

No one who does not share the Chantry's fanatical love of the Kabbalah is allowed to come to the Tower or stay at the Tower. No exceptions. The mages of the tower don't want to help with problems, nor do they want to teach new students. They wish to be left alone. The mages of the Tower are isolationists. After a few tries on the Troupe's part, the Kabbalah mages will state their position. If the Troupe reveals at any time that they are looking for Petra, the mages of Al Durab will tell them simply that they are miles off course, and to head to the east.

There is still the very distinct chance that the Troupe will be particularly stupid and insist on exploring the grounds themselves. This is what the golems are for: pest control. Statistics for the golems are in Appendix One.

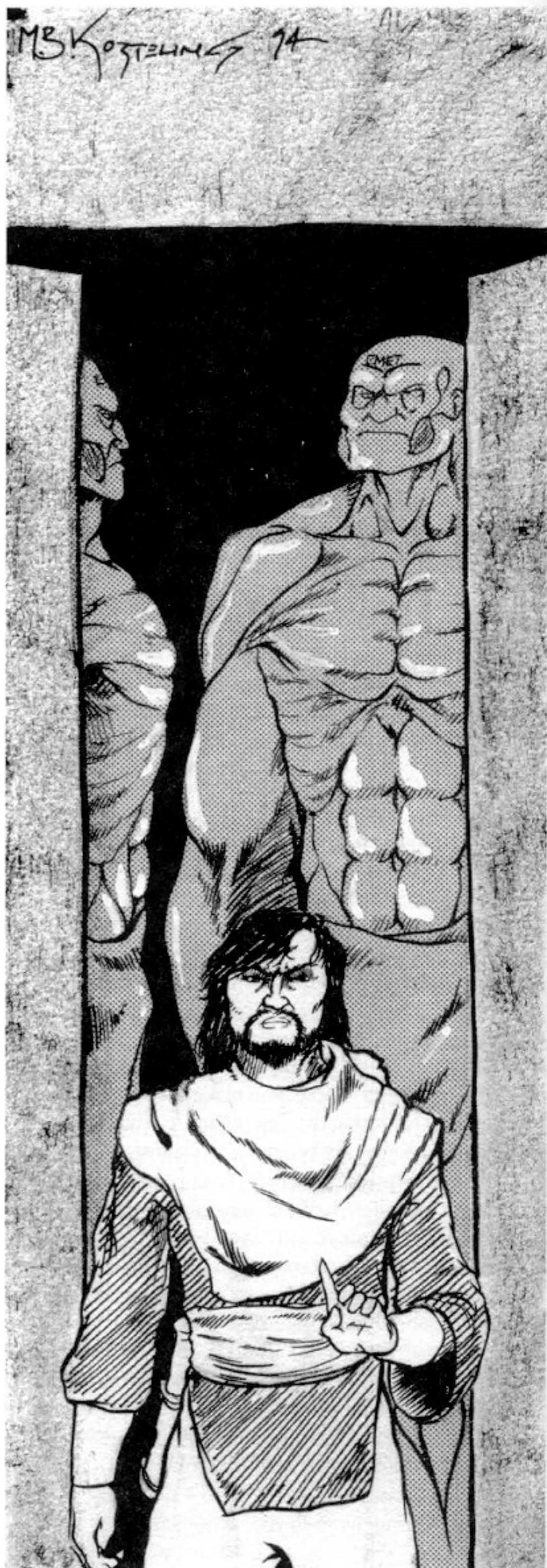
If the Troupe still can't catch the hint after encountering the golems, the mages of Al Durab will handle the problem themselves. These mages are old and powerful, and worse still, fanatical. They will not attempt to kill the Troupe unless actually attacked, but they will do their best to Co-locate the players where they can do no harm, say, into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Scene Two: You Want Us to Attack Who?



Petra is the best kept secret in Jordan. Most of Jordan, the Middle East and, for that matter, the world does not realize that Petra even exists. The forces that surround and defend Petra are formidable. The full details on Petra's history are presented in *A World of Darkness*. Just the same, here are a few details:

Talaq, an Assamite elder of great age and power, rules over Petra, and over Jordan as well. Talaq has forces watching the Troupe from the moment they arrive in Jordan. While he pays them little heed if they move through the desert in pursuit of the Tower of Al Durab, Talaq will still keep them under observation whenever possible. Should the Troupe then move towards Petra, a band of Jordanian soldiers, equal in number to the Troupe, will approach and force them back. The only way to stop the soldiers is to defeat them, and the soldiers fight



to the death. A second group of soldiers will be dispatched immediately if the first group falls; the second group is twice the number and will not stop to ask questions; they open fire on sight. If any Garou have been observed, at least one soldier will fire phosphorus grenades at the werewolf from a grenade launcher.

If the Troupe persists beyond these simple warnings, the Naba, the citizens of Petra and the fanatical fighters of Talaq, will attack without mercy, outnumbering the characters by twofold. The Naba are well versed in what is needed to kill a vampire, or a werewolf, or a mage. Should the Troupe survive all of this and press on, a larger group of Naba led by Talaq himself will approach and warn them away. Every character who stays beyond this point to fight will suffer from a Derangement; chosen by the player or the Storyteller, the Derangement will be permanent.

As with the Tower of Al Durab, the citizens of Petra will fight to the finish to assure that no one goes beyond the boundaries of their land. Something of extreme power lies within Petra, and that something wants no part of the Troupe's mission. Any Troupe member moving beyond the actual boundaries will be assaulted on a mental level and driven insane. The only defense for this attack is a Will-power roll (difficulty 10, minimum of 3 successes per turn required to avoid gaining a new Derangement).

Any character who still insists on reaching the heart of Petra has his mind destroyed completely. A useless shell is all that is left when this assault is finished. There is a chance that the mind could be brought back with magick, or even with Disciplines and Gifts, but the chance should be slim. The people of Petra take anyone found in a mindless state and deliver them to their friends in hostage negotiations—"your friend is dying; take him and leave or you will all suffer the same fate."

Petra is not a nice place to visit, and the Troupe should take the hint by this point and just leave. There is nothing to be gained from forcing their own agenda against whatever lies buried in Petra. Talaq's influence goes far beyond just Jordan; if he desired, he could arrange for the Troupe's deaths in almost any country. This is not a good man to have as an enemy. If the Troupe reaches as far as Petra, they may well have problems later. The Mossad, the intelligence agency for Israel, has agents within Petra. Any character getting close to Petra is photographed several times. Soon after the Troupe leaves, the information gathering process begins. If the Troupe members have killed while near Petra, they are likely to have a few surprises waiting in the future — surprises like firebombs and exploding homes.

Possible ways in which the Troupe and Talaq could come to an agreement are listed in detail in *A World of Darkness*.

Mexico City on the Third Day of The Dead - The Day of the Children



He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts

— Stephen King, "It"

There is a very strong possibility that one or more of the Troupe chose to stay in Mexico City. Peace does not return when he leaves. The fires started by Samuel Haight have become a conflagration. All around the city, the supernatural forces have prepared themselves for the worst; the Kindred are still looking for whatever assaulted their Havens, the Bone Gnawers are preparing for their greatest celebration, the Rite of the Dead, and the Technocracy is storming through the city in pursuit of any creature not aligned with them.

And then there's the Underbelly... anyone who was involved in the disruption of the Underbelly is now badly wanted. The leaders of the Underbelly want the interlopers dead. Anyone still in town may find a few unpleasant surprises waiting for them, as the Nosferatu are now watch-

ing as many of the supernaturals as they can. The Black Spiral Dancers will forego their normal solitude and actively hunt for the fools that disrupted their Hive, and the Nosferatu will do their best to point the Dancers in the right direction.

The paranoia in Mexico City has reached an all-time high, and old arguments among the Awakened are now being settled violently. The Technocracy is trying to locate a powerful cabal of Tradition mages, or perhaps an *ahriman* (cabal) of Nephandi. The Black Spiral Dancers are ready for any Garou they can find, and they have enlisted the assistance of several of Pentex's Fomori for the duration of the hunt. The Sabbat of Mexico City suspect everyone, including each other, but they definitely suspect any Kindred from another part of the world above their own. The city is boiling over with tensions and sporadic fighting, and as the sun sets, the wraiths of the Children come home to spend time with their families.



On the third Day of the Dead it is possible that nothing extraordinary happens to the Troupe members who stayed behind. It is also possible that they have a hundred bizarre encounters with the Dead. Euthanatos, Samedi, Giovanni and even Silent Striders are all likely to meet with the wraiths, possibly adding a single night's mystery as the Troupe tries to help a child find his murderer in the world's largest city. Many a dead child cries aloud on the Third Day of the Dead, lost and without family.

Storytellers are advised to play fast and loose with events on this day. It is possible that almost any supernatural that the character has met and killed in Mexico City will return, ready for a rematch. It is possible that any characters who were killed could return, saying their last good-byes, and it is possible that the supernatural rulers of Mexico City could find the Troupe, beginning a final conflict — well, only if the characters are *very* careless.

The Days of the Dead in Paraiso Vista.

Paraiso Vista is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Mexico City. Truly, there are few places left that seem so unaffected by the World of Darkness. The people of Paraiso Vista visit with their deceased, just as in Mexico City, but without the late-night drunken revelry, and without the overwhelming numbers of the dead walking among the small population.

The Third Day of the Dead: The Day of the Children

The third Day of the Dead differs from the others substantially. For one thing, it is also Halloween, and even in Mexico City, trick or treating is not uncommon. Children run through the streets in masks and gather treats for their trouble, and the Bone Gnawers wear masks of their own, special fetishes that make them undetectable by mage and vampire alike. On this one night, the Garou claim the blood of Kindred in the town, tearing apart any that they can in order to gain the necessary vitae for their final Rite of Death.

During the daylight hours, the Sleepers in Mexico go to their families' graveyards and tend the cemeteries, cleaning away a year's worth of weeds and painting the headstones and tombs in bright colors. Paper streamers decorate the walls of the cemetery, often covering any shrubbery as well, again to let the dead know that they are welcome. Last minute preparations are made for the feast that night and the next, and *Calacas* — Day of the Dead figurines — are purchased or made. Crafted from papier mache or from wood, the figurines represent every activity and walk of life — as viewed from the dead's perspective. Bookkeepers, doctors, librarians, even ice cream vendors — all are depicted in the performance of their duties, and they are depicted as skeletons. The figures are only a few inches tall, and the craftsmanship is almost negligible in some cases, but the power of the figures is real and strong. This power is the invitation to come home again, if only briefly.

In some places the friends of dead children come to play with the deceased's toys, allowing the parents to remember the child one last time; in some cases the dead child will actually join them. And everywhere, the dead children walk again. This not often a pleasant thing...

The Sleepers of Mexico prepare feasts in their homes, weaving trails of marigold petals to their front doors, trails by which the dead can find their way home again. In the streets the citizens dress in masks made to mock death and celebrate living, while the wraiths walk among them and remember what living was all about. And the Bone Gnawers help as many Sabbat as they can along the route to Final Death. Many Sabbat choose to stay hidden away on the Third Day of the Dead.



Chapter Two: Treasure of Tears

Fighting on with dignity
In life and death we deal
The power and the majesty
Amidst the blood and steel.
One shot at Glory
Driving hard and seeing red
Destiny calls me
Remember
Remember
— Judas Priest, "One Shot at Glory"

The second and final chapter of Haight's last stand finds the trap closing in. The strands of fate, of which the

Troupe form a part, weave steadily in upon the Skinner. At their end lies a beginning, as well. A dark beginning...

Part Three: Chaos Squared

Mexico City, The Fourth Day of the Dead

Plot

The Troupe returns to Mexico City in order to find Samuel Haight's trail. There is a very good chance that the Troupe decided not to return, but if they do, here's what happened:



- During the Third Day of the Dead, over a dozen Sabbat Kindred were killed. The Sabbat are not pleased, and they suspect that Garou have been in their town. The Sabbat are now out in force, running with their individual packs and trying to locate any Garou. The Black Hand is going into action, and the culprits will be found at any cost.

- The minions of Samuel Haight — including the Skin Dancers — have apparently left town, called forth by Haight to join him in Paraiso Vista. The only one who

knew where Haight could be found the other day, the Bone Gnawer called Wanderer, has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. The rest of the Bone Gnawers are now very suspicious of strangers, even other Garou if they knew the Wanderer's true nature. Unless the Troupe's Garou can prove their innocence, they have lost their only allies in the city. Several Uktena Garou have come to town, bearing fetishes like those of the Bone Gnawers and carrying other items of obvious power. Their only purpose for being in Mexico City is to help the Bone Gnawers with the Rites of the Dead.

- The Samedi population in Mexico City has increased substantially; Samedi from the United States and from South America have crept into town for reasons of their own. The Samedi will likely bring a great deal of paranoia if they are discovered, but they are here on their own mission, one involving the Days of the Dead. They will cause no grief for the Troupe unless the Troupe bothers them first. Several Giovanni are also in Mexico City, and they too are doing their best to avoid conflict.

- Awakened necromancers are in town for the Days of the Dead as well, gathering together in bands for protection. The Technocracy is in a foul mood and no one wants trouble. Naturally, trouble is on the way.

- The Technomancers are in poor spirits; the Days of the Dead are a contradiction to their philosophies, and the violence of the past days has brought Paradox and instability to an intolerable degree. The Convention leaders in Mexico City are doing their best to remain calm in light of the amazing conflicts that they have been forced to deal with. If the Technocracy was called in to deal with Pandemonium before, they are a good deal calmer, believing that the main cause of their troubles has now been vanquished. If the Underbelly still exists, tensions have risen to the breaking point and an emergency Symposium is called. The verdict is simple: The Pogrom has been lax and a full sweep of Mexico City is needed to repair the preposterous level of damage done to the Paradigm. The call to arms is here, and the verdict is war.

- The minions of Pandemonium have taken the "attack" on their lair personally. There is no time for subtlety. The Wyrm's army in Mexico City plans to sweep the offenders away, destroying any who survived the assault on Pandemonium. They have help in the form of three Ba'ali Kindred, ready to assist in the purging of the city. The time has come to claim the city once and for all.

- Pentex has watched and waited long enough. With proper orchestration, the devastation can be turned away from the corporation's areas of interest and turned towards interfering with the other forces at work in Pentex' corporate back yard. Several First Teams have been assembled, mostly wearing the badges of government police forces; Pentex plans to come out the victor in this fight, and they have the financial resources to assure that they win.

- The wraiths have their day of freedom; the time has come to defend their loved ones and gain vengeance against the supernaturals that have brought so much pain to Mexico City. There will be no feasting in family homes this year — there will be war. No one will escape their wrath, and they have assistance from both mages and vampires this time. Mexico City will be freed from its oppression at last.

It Begins

The Fourth Day of the Dead begins with sporadic fighting. Before the day is done, blood will flow like water in the rapids, down the streets of Mexico City. And that is just as Huitzilopochtli wants it.

Marauder mages make their presence known just after 9:00 PM. The Marauders never directly challenge anyone, but are perfectly willing to take on any and all comers. The Marauders use vulgar magick employing the Time Sphere to send people as much as one year forward through time, and when possible sending vampires exactly 13 hours into the future, to 10:00 AM. Their entire purpose for the attack is simply to cause chaos, to help Samuel Haight remain safe.

The Scene for Tradition Mages

Grimm looked at his remaining friends, shaking his head at the loss of so many members of the cabal. He felt himself doubting the need to destroy Haight at such a cost. Trina was gone, destroyed by the damnable thing below this city; Alex died a cleaner death, torn limb from limb by the Garou, but he died just the same. Just two others with him, two friends left in a city gone mad. The Garou were still there, save the one that killed Alex; It'd been worth the Paradox to watch its ugly face burn away under flesh turned to silver.

He forced his mind away from the thoughts of dead friends and companions, back to the matter at hand. The remaining Garou were looking awfully nervous, and he could not blame them. Grimm could feel the tension in the air, almost like the calm before the hurricane came to sweep everything away.

"Grimm."

The one word chilled the marrow of his bones, and he turned to find the source of the familiar voice. Before him stood his Trina, looking just as she always had, save for the sadistic smile on her face. He felt his heart shatter as he realized what had happened. Around her, on all sides and even in the air above her, the Nephandi and their vile associates stood, ready to do battle. "Grimm, darling, did you miss me?" Grimm never had a chance to respond. The Black Spiral Dancers were too fast for him to avoid...

Being in Mexico City was risky at first, but now the situation is much worse. The Technocracy has opened the flood gates, and the Men in Black, the HIT Marks, Superiors and other, stranger minions of the Technomancers have come out in force. A Tradition mage would do best to

hide. But there is still the matter of Samuel Haight. He is still expected back in the city sooner or later. The only hope that exists is to find allies in the city. But who?

The Garou are insane, hunting Sabbat Kindred and shaking their fetishes as if they could possibly help against the Technocracy. The Sabbat are vile, ruthless beasts who cannot be trusted. The Minions of the Wyrm are hunting after any who violated their sanctum sanctorum — or who they think might have — and the ghosts are in an uproar because their families are stuck in the middle of the entire battlezone. There is nowhere to turn that is safe, save perhaps to the Celestial Chorus strongholds in the city.

Paraiso Vista, is only 80 miles away — perhaps Haight will show himself there. Certainly the small town must be safer than Mexico City is at this time. Tradition mages must choose carefully. The Celestial Chorus might well need help, but Samuel Haight must be stopped. If the evidence is accurate, he has destroyed two Nodes so far. How many more will disappear before the madman is satisfied?

The Scene for Technocracy Mages

Arthur Trenton sat towards the back of the huge auditorium, afraid of what the leaders' verdict would be. He could hear the sounds of breathing from his cohorts, but he could not tell what they had decided. He didn't know if they would point the finger at him, and say that he had advised against telling where the Nephandi Stronghold was located.

But, dammit, the delays caused by filling out reports would have let Samuel Haight get away without any punishment at all, and Arthur couldn't stand that idea. Couldn't the fools see that he was just trying to pick the most prominent evil to hunt and destroy? By the size of the Nephandi's ahriman, the thing had been there for years. What difference would a few more days make?

The leaders of the Conventions sat in their seats, all too much like thrones for Arthur's liking, and they stared out into the audience. Arthur felt the cold dread before they even looked at him. Robert Larson was the first to speak, and as his mouth opened, Arthur Trenton quaked inside. "Boys, let's make sure that Mister Larson is properly incarcerated. What we have here, ladies and gentlemen, is a bona-fide Nephandi in Convention clothing." The Men in Black grabbed him from each side, and as he prepared to execute his escape plan, he felt the fast acting drugs tear into his system. He wanted to cry out, wanted so much to escape. Instead he could only look on as his consciousness faded. There, Landford was smiling smugly; he always knew that Landford was the weak link in his group. Sold out by a friend, an associate. Sold out for a possible promotion...

An emergency Symposium is called to deal with the problems facing Mexico City. In a very large auditorium in the Primary Technocracy Construct in the city, all of the available Technomancers are called together. They are gathered not to discuss matters, but to hear the verdict of the Convention leaders.

Time Table for October 31

4:00 AM: Samuel Haight gathers his forces and leaves Mexico City.

10:00 AM: The emergency Symposium is called.

10:45 AM: The emergency Symposium begins, and the decision for a full purge of all supernaturals is the topic.

Complications: Do Technocracy player characters step forward and literally save the city? Or do they watch on as Mexico City reaches full-scale war?

11:30 AM: The Technocracy begins its war against the supernaturals. Known Kindred are pulled from their communal Havens and left to burn in the sunlight. The few known Garou are shot on sight.

11:30 AM: If the Technocracy player characters get involved, and report the location of the Underbelly, the Underbelly is attacked in force. Minor tremors move through the city as explosion after explosion lays waste to the cancerous Wyrmhole beneath the city.

12:00 PM through 7:00 PM: The assault against the supernaturals/the Wyrmhole continues. 43 Kindred are pulled from their Havens during this time. Despite their best efforts, the Technocracy can find no sign of Garou in the city. The Minions of Pandemonium retaliate, calling forth Banes and any minions of the Wyrm that can be found. Harzomatuli uses the Thunderwyrm's Egg and calls for the thunderwyrms.

7:00 PM: The sun has set and the Kindred awaken. A call to war is given. Black Hand operatives start embracing the celebrating humans, and the population of Kindred in Mexico City increases substantially.

9:00 PM: The thunderwyrms arrive. If Harzomatuli is still alive, the thunderwyrms attack the strongholds of the Technocracy; if he is dead, they just start attacking anything in reach. Marauder mages enter the city in force, bringing odd changes in reality with them. The Marauders deliberately fuel the fires of war, and cause time to blur throughout the city. Paradox Spirits go on a rampage.

10:00 PM: The wraiths retaliate. Kindred are attacked and Technomancers learn the true meaning of "The Ghost in the Machine."

11:00 PM: The battles continue, increasing in magnitude.

12:00 AM: The Fifth Day of the Dead Begins. The Garou begin their Rite of the Dead, and the wraiths are literally ripped away from the living world, sealed off from the physical realm for a short time.

The Technocracy has decided that Mexico City needs to be sanitized; all supernatural elements must be destroyed.

If Technomancer player characters have been to the Underbelly of the Wyrm, they could very well save the city from destruction. All they need do is point out where the known entrances to the Wyrm-hole are located. You'd best believe the Technocracy wants a scapegoat for this mess. The Conventions are strong here, but any person in charge could be found wanting and be replaced. As the old saying goes, fecal matter rolls down hill.

If the leaders of the Conventions are replaced, their underlings be replaced as well. Iteration X could well decide that everything in the city has to go, Convention mages as well, especially if some of the darker files are found and read. For every leader in Mexico City, files exist that tell of the warped experiments taking place under their supervision. Madness is powerful here, and even the most faithful members of the Technomancers have suffered from a need to perform perverted acts in the name of science. While these acts can easily be justified in their own eyes, the Convention leaders know that outsiders reading the files would be less than pleased.

Silence can be golden. If a Technomancer has waited this long to reveal the location of the Underbelly, she will be looked upon with suspicion for a long time. Why wasn't this information given freely before? Naturally, a quick thinker could pass the blame on to his immediate superior, but that could be a disastrous mistake, depending on whom the superior knows...

The worst possible case scenario must be played out. Every supernatural must be driven away or destroyed if the Technocracy is to survive the crisis. No one is safe.

The Scene for Garou:

Segrid-Sings-Off-Key looked around him and felt the panic trying to set in again. Damn, there was no escape from the madness in this town. Over there, behind a cheap skull mask, one of the Bone Gnawers from the Sweet Water Sept stood in Crinos form, and no one noticed. Luna's sweetest song, if only Old Sawbones had lived! Perhaps he could have made them understand that they were not the enemy. But, no, the Gnawers looked on his entire pack as if they were little more than garbage. Or a little less, when you considered the source of that glare.

The mages were hurt badly, and Segrid was little better himself. He rubbed the spot where his right eye had been only an hour ago and winced at the lighting bolt of pain that screamed across his nerve endings. It would grow back, but only if he lived through the night. The twisted, mocking howls of fomori were coming closer, and Segrid felt his hackles rising again. All the Rage he thought long gone returned to him, and he bared his fangs in anticipation.

They came from everywhere, flowing towards the remainders of the pack like a tide of serpents. They all carried firearms,



not that they needed them. Segrid called out hoarsely, demanding his packmates to be ready. One last fight; if that was all that was left, he'd make it count. The fomori came forward, surrounding the pack and the mages as well. And all the while, that damned Bone Gnawer watched on, singing softly and weeping..

The Wyrm is too strong here; it is no longer winning, it has won. From every opening to the Underbelly, the vile creatures spill forth: Banes, fomori, Black Spiral Dancers, and other, stranger things. Perhaps it's not too late to stop them, but how? The Bone Gnawers and Uktena walk unharmed through the miasma, pretending that nothing is wrong. They sing their little songs and prepare for the next night, and still they are ignored.

All around, the Leeches take to the streets, assaulting every possible enemy. The mages come forth with their pseudo-soldiers, striking against everyone, even those who only look suspicious. The humans of Mexico City are in danger, and their dead relatives have taken the threats personally. There are Kinfolk here, everywhere around the Garou, and no one seems to care. Surely the Impurgium was never this violent, and surely the need for the Impurgium was never so great.

Throughout the violence there is no sign of Samuel Haight. He has left the city, and there is only one place he could have gone. The only chance to stop him could slip through the Troupe's fingers if he is not found. The city is being destroyed, the Wyrm is engulfing the masses, but which is truly more important: saving a twisted city held by the Wyrm, or stopping the Skinner?

If the Troupe decides to stay and help in Mexico City, they are asked to join in on the Rite of the Dead (see Appendix Two).

The Scene for Camarilla Kindred

Terrier looked pissed, and rightly so. His skull was completely exposed on one side, and his blue hide flapped loosely in the slight breeze. Even Hendrix had finally lost her cool. Blake had learned a great deal about his friends in the last few nights, not the least of which was that neither would make a healthy enemy. Terrier tried speaking, and finally spat a few more shattered fangs on the ground in disgust at his inability to do so. Finally he pointed, and Blake tried to understand his meaning.

Hendrix made the job easier: "He's telling us to get the fuck out of town before it's too damned late." The vulgarity was a sure sign of how pissed she was. Hendrix never cursed. Still, even that sounded sophisticated coming from her. "Paraiso Vista. That's where we should be. Let's go. Now."

Blake decided she was all right for a Ventrite, nodded his head and gestured for his associates to wait by the side while he hot-wired a jeep that belonged to the Policia. Enough was too much; better to try their luck in the little shit-hole to the north. Anything was better than another minute in Mexico City...

Mexico City is just too dangerous. The overwhelming numbers of Sabbat Kindred in the city almost guarantees Final Death. The time has come to flee. If the Kindred have been helping Haight all along, he will offer to take them with him to Paraiso Vista. If at anytime they have questioned him or threatened him, they are abandoned. The Lupines have taken to the streets, and they are destroying everything in sight. Oddly deformed humans run through the streets as well, joining in the carnage. The police in this city are crazy; they have started a grand scale slaughter, and no one is safe from their weapons. The Sabbat are responding in kind, taking liberties that violate even their own twisted version of the Masquerade. There is nowhere that is safe.

If the player characters are Archons, they could well call for Justicar intervention, but frankly, they would be wasting their time. No Justicar is willing to get killed over chaos in Sabbat territory. The likeliest response from said Justicar is "Good work; handle it." In which case the Archons have just buried themselves.

Most shrewd Kindred will take this opportunity to find Paraiso Vista on the map. Paraiso Vista is a very small town almost 80 miles away from Mexico City. There are no major roads leading to Paraiso Vista, and the closest bus stop is 6 miles away from the village.

The Scene for the Sabbat

The taste of Vitae was always sweet, but not as sweet as the pleasures the recruits were going through. The Embrace. Was anything ever that good again? Moxy doubted it. She Embraced and drank, drank and Embraced. An endless assembly line of new Kindred to help in the battle.

Beside her, Enrique grabbed the minds of the newly created Kindred and forced them into submission; Enrique liked his work and it showed. They all obeyed his commands. An army — they'd have an army to fight back against the attacks. Even through her anger and the pleasures of feeding, Moxy still heard the screams of her pack as they were pulled into the sunlight.

Never again. She'd never let the bastards do something like that again. Everyone that wasn't Sabbat was going down; orders of the Black Hand, as if she needed orders. The screams she heard took her mind off the business of giving new life to her latest victim. She looked up in time to see Enrique's head torn away from his body. The next time she saw anything would be in her next life. They call them HIT Marks for a reason...

The fools have killed too many of the Kindred to be allowed to live. Twelve last night and even more during the daylight hours. There should be a high level of fear; what if the enemy knows where the player characters have their Havens? Across the region, the Sabbat have been attacked, pulled from their Havens in the daylight and forced to face the wrath of the sun. But the sun has set now, and the time to win back what has been lost is at hand. Soldiers are needed, and perhaps the best way to handle the problems in Mexico City is to double or even triple the vampiric

population. The Black Hand is at war already, creating new Kindred, and the call to arms has sounded. Now is the time for action. The Sabbat in Mexico City are willing to allow you to fight, to become a part of the city.

Should they be warned of Samuel Haight's plans? Should they be told all that he has done, or what the player characters think he might have done? The decision is in the air; do you risk the loss of the Sabbat's greatest city and follow Haight to the lair of a powerful elder? Or do you follow the requests of the Sabbat and bring down the

enemies in Mexico City? Both hold risks, both hold the promise of great rewards.

Any characters who opt to stay in the city for the duration must face the combined threat of several major forces lashing blindly in the hopes of smashing their enemies. By 9:00 PM, the city is in a full-scale war. The Troupe should survive the encounters if they avoid doing anything blatantly stupid. The wisest choice is to leave, to head for Paraiso Vista, which is where all the real action is anyway.

Part Four: Chaos Cubed



All Saint's Day — the Fifth and Final Day of the Dead

*I may be going to Hell in a bucket, baby
But at least I'm enjoying the ride*
— The Grateful Dead, "Hell in a Bucket"

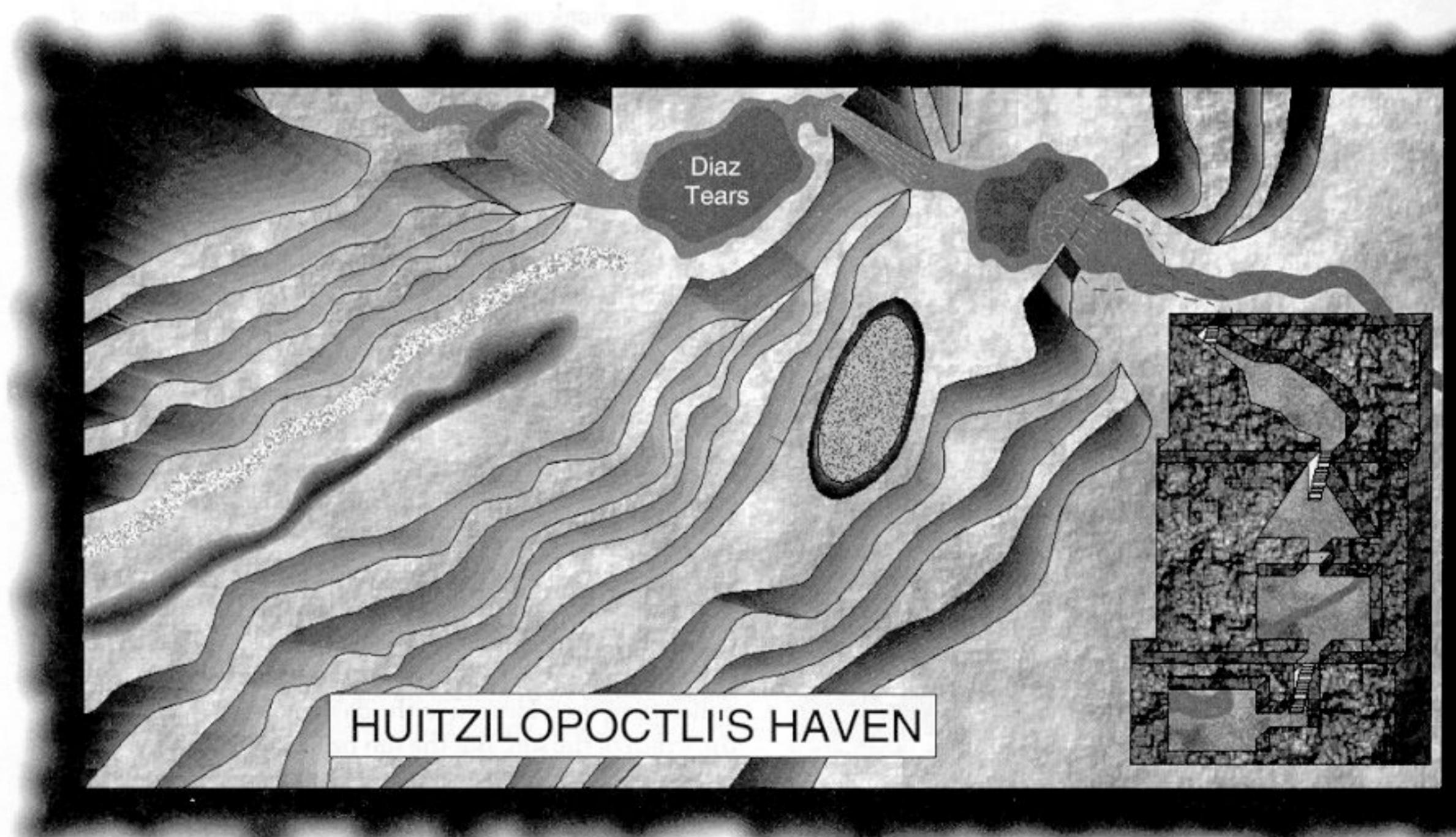
Plot

The final battle with Samuel Haight takes place in Paraiso Vista, a sleepy little town with a nasty secret.

Paraiso Vista has been the secret Haven of Huitzilopochtli for over 300 years. He has not always been there, but the town has always been under his complete control. The few times any supernaturals came to Paraiso

Vista, the guardian Kindred in the area slaughtered them without mercy. Huitzilopochtli has used his powers to ensure that the people of the town had nothing to fear. When the droughts came, he has made rain. When diseases struck the people and their herds of animals, he has removed the offending viruses. When the people of Mexico decided that communications were necessary, he allowed one phone in the home of his servant. When the government of Mexico decided that the area was better off with a military base than with the tiny town, he made the government forget the spot even existed.

All has been tranquil in Paraiso Vista for 300 years. Now Samuel Haight is paying a visit to the Haven of Huitzilopochtli; Paraiso Vista will never be the same.



HUITZILOPOCTLI'S HAVEN

Scene One: Mexican Standoff



Running.
On our way
Hiding.
You will pay
Dying
One thousand death
Searching
Seek and Destroy

— Metallica, "Search and Destroy"

Getting There

If they took the time to study the information enclosed in the scrolls left behind by Samuel Haight, the Troupe has known for two days that Huitzilopochtli's Haven is somewhere in or around Paraiso Vista. The Troupe has also known that Samuel Haight would be coming here. However, the characters just might have been foolish enough to ignore the warnings; they might have stayed in Mexico City or, worse still, gone to Jordan. If either of these prove to be the case, the Troupe must now race against the madman to reach Paraiso Vista first.

It is also possible that the Troupe never recovered the missing scroll; either they never made it down into Pandemonium or they were stopped along the way. If the Troupe could not personally recover the scroll, have some other character — possibly Wanderer or another of Haight's flunkies — grab it and run. The Troupe can acquire the clue by stealth, force, magick or chance at some later point.

Being There

The only task before the Troupe, aside from Haight and his minions, is getting past the guardian Kindred of Huitzilopochtli. If they arrive too soon before the Skinner, by more than a day, they will encounter the guardians. These three Ba'ali Kindred are all eighth Generation, and the statistics provided in Appendix One are sufficient to cover them. The Ba'ali guardians leave the area on the night of the Fourth Day of the Dead. They have been assigned to assist the Sepulchre in the battle for supremacy in Mexico City. One less obstacle for the Troupe to overcome, provided they do not arrive before sunset on November 1st.

If the Troupe have already been lying in wait for the Skinner, they have plenty of time to prepare a surprise party for him. If they have not, Haight will have prepared for them, especially if their paths have already crossed. Haight's minions are carefully chosen for this mission because of their loyalty and their ability to keep their mouths shut. Haight values secrecy above all else, especially where his plans are concerned. But Haight has fallen victim to a flaw that most mages suffer from at one point or another: hubris. Haight has started thinking of himself as invincible, a very nasty mistake and one that will inevitably prove fatal.

As the Troupe may well decide to beat Haight to the punch, they can have a great deal of time to devise nasty surprises all their own. The Skinner is tired and too self-confident for his own good, but he also has quite a bit of power, several allies with him, and a group of Marauders watching his every move. He has help that even he does not know about.

Huitzilopochtli

Haight also has one other surprise — Huitzilopochtli. What no one realizes is that Haight is not necessary to Huitzilopochtli's plans. Haight has already done all that the vampire wanted; by starting a massive war in Mexico City, he has spurred the suffering that helps Huitzilopochtli feed on dying souls.

Huitzilopochtli is awake. He has been slowly recovering from Torpor for over a week. To the North of Paraiso Vista, hidden behind the stream that feeds the lake and wells, is the last site that Huitzilopochtli prepared centuries ago. A massive stone wall that bears the symbol of a huge dragon rests buried beneath tons of dirt and concealed by the roots of trees, hidden even from supernatural sight.

Within the lair, beyond the dragon-seal, is Huitzilopochtli. He watches patiently as Samuel Haight approaches, and he sees all even as the Troupe prepares for final conflict. The Aztec god of war simply watches because he *can*. He is about to inherit the world, but first there is enough time for the conclusion of his little games.

Huitzilopochtli wants to see who the winners in this battle are. If Haight is victorious, he plans to reward him with exactly what he has wanted — powerful Kindred blood. If the Troupe is victorious, he plans to break his long fast on them.

The war god, however, suffers from the same fatal flaw that dooms his mortal pawn: overconfidence. Hubris. Despite his awesome power, Huitzilopochtli remains vulnerable to fire and powerful magick. He has witnessed, through the eyes of others, the destructive potential of the modern age. Though he chooses to disregard the potency of the two forces converging on his resting place, Huitzilopochtli is about to learn a lesson in firepower.

If the Troupe Arrives First

The Troupe finds nothing of great importance in Paraiso Vista, unless they actively search for the Haven of Huitzilopochtli. His Haven is difficult to find, and there are no solid clues on the parchments that the Troupe found in Huitzilopochtli's previous lair. The papers do point to Paraiso Vista, but they do not reveal step by step instructions for

locating the ancient vampire. Haight has sworn to find the war god's resting place, even if he must level the whole town to do so. Locating Huitzilopochtli's lair, however, is not necessarily a wise move, as indicated later in this chapter.

The Troupe could simply prepare for Haight's arrival, mending the wounds they have suffered and clearing the town of its inhabitants. They could also call for reinforcements; there are plenty among the Traditions and Garou who would dearly love to get their hands on Samuel Haight. Hot or cold, vengeance is a savory dish, especially in the World of Darkness. There is a very real possibility that the Troupe could have a veritable army waiting in the wings for Samuel Haight when he arrives.

Haight is still not without surprises; he has brought an army of his own — a small army, but an army nonetheless. He has 10 fomori and four Skin Dancers with him, and none of them likes being surprised. Because the Skinner is also not absolutely certain that an Antediluvian is going to like being awakened, and might, in fact, take the disturbed slumber personally, Haight has brought one last weapon.

The largest of the fomori carries a heavy backpack, and in this pack is a very powerful toy that Haight affectionately calls his Sun Lamp. The Sun Lamp does nothing but release solar radiation that has been stored and magnified. Thanks to the immense amounts of Quintessence at his disposal, Samuel Haight had time to practice with a few mirrors and a special rote designed to preserve the energies of the sun. Thanks to modern technology, he has arranged for the power to radiate in a straight beam, much like a laser.

The Sun Lamp

The stream of energy that comes out of the Sun Lamp is good for the entire scene and is one foot in width. It has only one charge. A Sleeper hit by the stream would be severely sunburned in less than a minute. The device is very delicate, and can only be struck once before it malfunctions. If more than four successes are scored in an attack against the Sun Lamp, the internal charge is released. Any vampire around the exploding Lamp risks the damage below, but only for one turn.

The Lamp does four levels of aggravated damage to vampires, four levels of normal damage to anyone else. This damage is on a "per turn" basis — two turns in the light would do two continuous attacks, and so on. Three or more successes blinds the target; five or more may blind him permanently. This weapon may provoke Rötschreck. Attackers use Dexterity + Firearms or Heavy Weapons. This attack may be dodged.

Difficulty

8

Damage
4 Health Levels

Range
200

Haight also carries his staff. He is very hard to hurt with magick at the present time. But Haight is not bullet proof, nor fire proof. The Skinner can be hurt — it's just not easy. The main advantage, again, is that the Troupe could beat him to the location. From there anything goes.

If Haight Gets There First

Haight knows what he wants and knows how to get it. He does not want to destroy the vampire; he wants to deal with him. The madman is therefore obligated to wait patiently for nightfall before making his move. If Haight arrives first, he will dispatch his followers to strategic positions around Paraiso Vista and leave them to deal with anyone coming into the town. As always, Samuel Haight will avoid combat unless absolutely necessary. He has more important goals at the present time.

All of Haight's servants carry automatic weapons and are capable of unarmed combat. The Skin Dancers will appear as normal people until the combat begins — Gifts, Disciplines and magick aside. If confronted, they will immediately convert to Crinos form. The fomori and the Skin Dancers are all fanatically dedicated to Haight, and will fight to the death. If the group looks to be losing to the players, the Skinner will make his presence known. The Skinner has no patience for interference, not so close to his goal; he will use vulgar magick to make his point clear.

When the Troupe first arrives, Haight's minions open up with everything they have. They want no disturbances and plan to take no prisoners. Most of the fomori have ranged powers, and those that do not are not afraid to throw the shrapnel grenades that Haight provided. None of the fomori or Skin Dancers have countermagick; unless they can Dodge or resist direct attacks, magick will have its full effect on them.

If Haight came with the vampire player characters, another level of conflict is added. Do the players want to help Haight? Have they been stringing him along? Now is the time for the players to decide. Whatever their decision, the player characters will have to live with it.

Running the Final Battle

The climax of this tale should be epic. Haight has become a grand figure in the World of Darkness. His death should be a triumph for those who have come so far and risked so much to kill him. Whether the Skinner goes down beneath the claws of Garou, a vampire's fangs or a mage's magick, his fall should shake the world.

The Staff of the World Tree is a symbol of all that Haight has become: bloated with stolen power and ready to blow. Whatever happens to Haight, the Staff should follow him into oblivion. Its demolition represents a brutal kind of rebirth — the transformation of the land.

Allow the players to kill Haight personally. Make them work for it, but pay them off for their efforts. Give them hints to overcome his firepower, shift the terrain to make the fight dramatic, and keep long drawn-out die rolls to a minimum. If and when Shaitan emerges, make him frightening but evasive. He should not stick around to fight — mortals are not worth his time.

Narrative Combat: Storytellers are advised to let the background blaze away behind the player characters. Describe the roaring flames and chattering guns without rolling for the location of every bullet. Play fast and loose with combat rolls and encourage your Troupe to perform tricks and crazy stunts. Let daring and cleverness win the battle, not brute force.

The Battlemap: The full-color map in this book can be used for the climactic struggle outside of Shaitan's Haven. If you use miniatures in your game, you can play out the confrontation on the mountainside with this map.

Statistics: For simplicity, you may consider Haight's fomori to be "two good shot" characters, adversaries who fall after getting hit for four Health Levels or more. Give them a Firearms and Melee dice pool of seven, with a base difficulty of 6 to hit. Hand-to-hand attacks should do four dice, while firearms should do $7 + 1$ per success rolled. This will greatly speed combat.

The Final Conflict



*There's no time to give at all
I give you grief and blow my hatred
Further in your mind
You reach, I run, you fall
On skinned knees you crawl*
— Alice in Chains, "Confusion"

Grimm wiped the sweat from his scarred face as the last villager fled down the road, leaving Paradise behind. Convincing the innocent Sleepers that Hell in all its forms was about to descend upon their town had been difficult, but in the end the sheriff had listened to reason. Perhaps it was all worth it if the innocents survived. Wasn't that what Ascension was all about, seeking a better reality, striving for perfection? All the same, it hurt. Bad. The innocents had been saved, but they would be innocent no longer. Paradise was going to Hell.

Does the Troupe beat Samuel Haight to the punch? Do they arrive in Paraiso Vista before the Skinner can set up camp? If so, they may save the town. If not, a village of bystanders will pay the price. Huitzilopochtli has groomed Paraiso Vista over the centuries for a reason, and that reason is at hand. If the Troupe wins, they may have just enough time to evacuate the town before sundown and the arrival of Haight.

In either case, the town itself will likely be destroyed. Such is the price of destiny. Fate has chosen Paraiso Vista as the site of a great end and a terrible beginning. If the lives of the villagers can be spared, they may carry their small harmony into the World of Darkness. Whether it survives remains to be seen. Fate is rarely kind.

If the Troupe Loses the Race

If Haight beats the Troupe to Paraiso Vista, he will rush to the door of Huitzilopochtli's Haven as soon as the sun sets. He has no reason to stop in his plans and is fairly confident that the troops he brought with him can handle any intrusions. Even if they cannot, they can hold the fort for the small amount of time this takes.

This is an ideal time for the Troupe (and any allies they might have) to strike. Haight is out in the open, moving toward his destiny with frantic disregard for stealth or subtlety. Blinded as he is by weariness, pride and desire, Haight leaves the town wide open as a screen for his own actions. The Troupe will have to go through it to get to him, and his retainers will ensure that this isn't easy. A final surprise awaits.

Bloodbath

Whether or not Haight actually reaches his destination, Huitzilopochtli has decided that the time has come to make his presence known. While the battle rages near the entrance to his lair, the powerful Kindred emerges from his lair to finish what he started. Every living human in Paraiso Vista will be sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli's master, the demon Ba'al, unless the players can stop the vampire.

Huitzilopochtli is only a name that was convenient when the Kindred came to what is now Mexico. His true name is Shaitan, and he has served the demons of Hell for almost 6,500 years. The purpose of his sacrifices is simple —



the power gained from the released souls is enough to awaken his brethren, the other 12 Fourth Generation Ba'ali. The time of Gehenna is one step closer.

The characters can see Huitzilopochtli clearly—he is too confident in his power to be secretive. At a dramatic point in the conflict, he will shatter the stone that blocks the entrance to his Haven and race towards the village below. If the people of Paraiso Vista remain, he will rip into them like a chainsaw through rotted wood.

The carnage in Paraiso Vista defies simple description; Shaitan tears bodies apart with his bare hands, calling in a vulgar and long forgotten tongue as he dedicates each soul to Ba'al's greater glory. His Celerity allows Shaitan to move in a virtual blur, and bodies seem to explode of their own volition. Bathed in innocent blood, Shaitan is a very powerful figure, terrifying to behold. Any attempt to attack him requires a Willpower Roll, difficulty 8, with at least three successes.

A devil personified walks the Earth. This devil has a weakness, however; his ignorance of modern technology and clever magick. Though he has observed the world outside through the centuries, Shaitan has no real experience with the awesome power of 20th century warfare. Knowing that a thing exists is one thing; feeling it burn your skin away is another.

Deep in his heart, the ancient knows fear. Even the greatest of vampires knows the curse of the Rötschreck, the fear of fire. The holocaust in Mexico City has made Shaitan leery of explosives and modern magick. Paradox, coincidental magick and high explosives are mysteries to the ancient. Left to his own devices, Shaitan will slaughter the town. Confronted with a determined assault using fire, explosives or, worst of all, the Sun Lamp, the vampire will flee. For now.

If the Troupe Wins the Race

If the Troupe beats Haight to Paraiso Vista, a massive battle begins—the endgame of the Skinner's war. In the town, on the mountain, in the very lair of Shaitan himself, the Troupe will collect their pound of flesh from the skin of Samuel Haight. This fight should be run for maximum drama and excitement; long drawn-out die rolling or *deus ex machina* interventions by Storyteller characters should be avoided. The Troupe has struggled long and hard to get this far. Weigh the odds in favor of a rousing slugfest. The Skinner must die. Needless to say, the killer of Samuel Haight will gain great Renown among the werewolves. Such glory will not, however, come easily.

Shaitan will race from his Haven at a dramatic point in the battle, totally ignoring Samuel Haight. If the villagers have been evacuated from the town, the monster will be furious. If not, he will ignore anyone in his

The Song of Huitzilopochtli

I have slept for so long, waiting for this moment. The time has come to awaken my beloved siblings, the other masters of the Ba'ali. We are legion, and we have bidden our time for long enough. The world is ripe for the picking; so little love is left, so much hatred and violence. Until Gehenna we were made to suffer, and so Gehenna shall come. At last my brethren will know peace, the peace that only destruction can bring us.

I see them. Beyond the walls of my Haven they squabble. Little children playing foolish games. So easily they dance, puppets all...

My body moves after centuries of immobility; there is no pain, only fluid motion and grace. Great Ba'al, I shall never be able to repay my debt to you, but here at least, I shall make a start.

See them, the tiniest of infants next to me. Can you feel their fear as clearly as I can? Can you see the tremors that shake their bodies? Let them finish their petty war. I have other matters to attend to. My special children wait below, believing that they are blessed of their God and woefully innocent of any sins worth noticing. They are perfect, 400 pure souls ready to feed you, my master. Great Ba'al accept this offering and know that it is only the first of many. My ruse is at last ended; your pitiful servant, Shaitan, is ready to do your bidding.

path until he reaches his planned sacrifices — the innocents of Paraiso Vista. Anyone attempting to go toe to toe with Shaitan will be smashed to pulp. A determined attack, however, will cause him to flee. The vampire has not planned and rested all these years simply to die in a stupid pitched battle. Why should he fight? The world is full of victims.

Haight will be furious. All of his battles have been for nothing. He may well attack Shaitan himself in his rage. His quarry gone, the Skinner may either stand or attempt to escape. He does not realize that his luck has finally run out.

There is one fatal flaw that Haight has not realized about his Staff of the World Tree; while the staff does indeed add substantially to his countermagick roll, it only works against one source of attack at a time. Haight uses the staff to power his countermagick, and to aid him in his own defenses against any Garou or Kindred attacks. There are limits to what even this Talisman can do. Samuel Haight has built up a substantial charge on his Paradox account; that charge is about to come due. With interest.

The Paradox Nuke

The Troupe gives Haight their best shot; if they succeed on their own, let them have the glory of ripping Haight's skin from his own bones or draining his potent blood. If they're too battered by this point to take him down, other factors come into play, factors that Haight himself has set in motion.

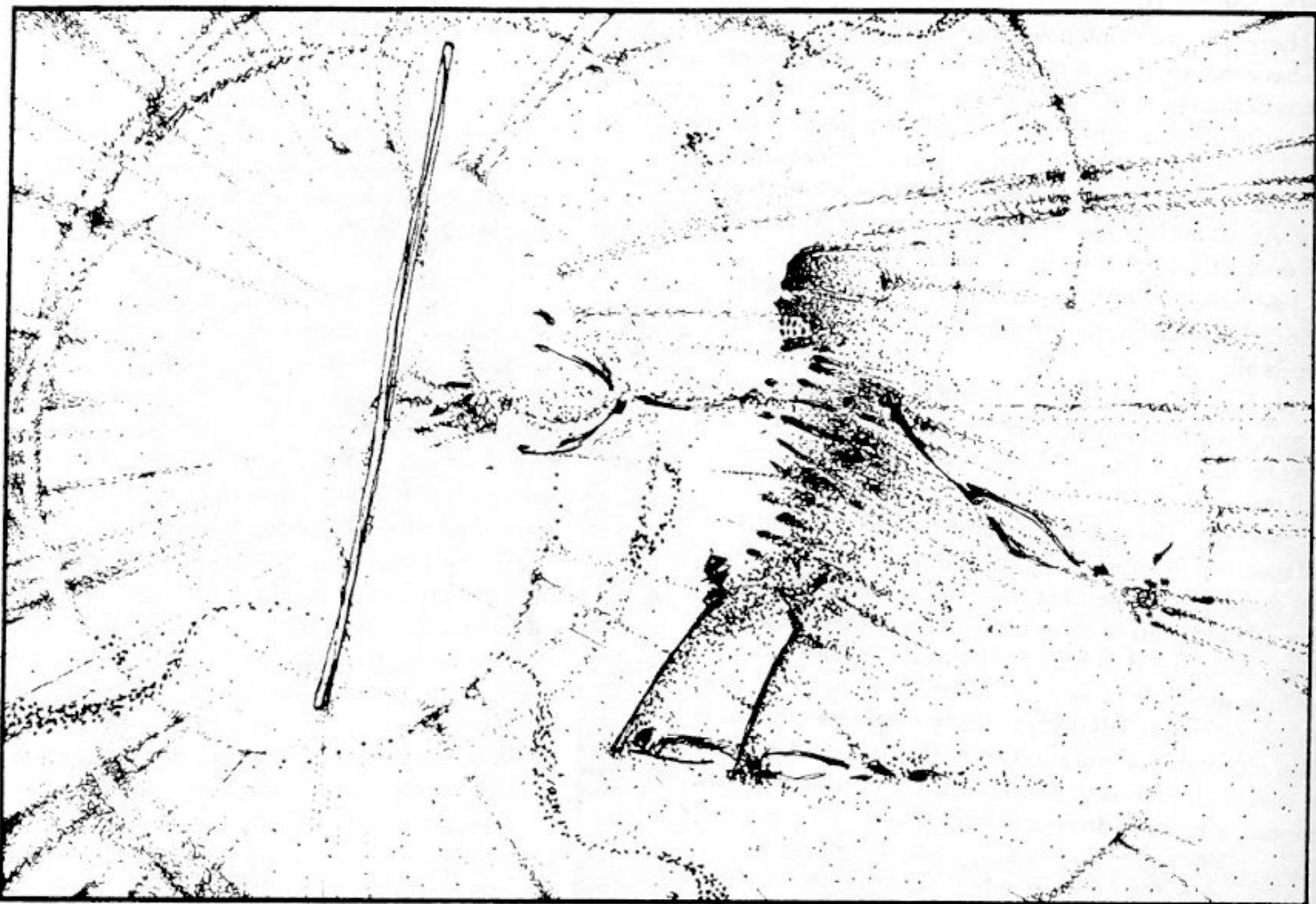
The Staff has become a Paradox battery, absorbing incoming magick and the Skinner's own Paradox leakage. It has taken about all that it can handle. Now each use of the staff causes a portion of the Quintessence stored inside to change, literally transforming the power into Paradox. Any mage with one or more dots in Prime will be able to see the holocaust waiting to happen.

When Haight has absorbed more than five magickal attacks or has fired off more than five vulgar magick effects, the staff deactivates. With the next usage, the Staff cracks, and Haight takes the full damage of the attack or the Paradox. If Haight is struck even once more — and that includes the impact of falling dead or unconscious to the ground — the Staff explodes.

Samuel Haight is hit by raw energies — Quintessence, Paradox and possibly others. The power is such that the Troupe can clearly see Haight's skeleton before the flesh is seared away from his body. Haight's last words are lost in a crackle of thunder, and the entire mountain is bathed in eldritch lights.

The Staff's explosion is a massive thing, and only blind luck saves any of the Troupe. The surviving Marauders, who have watched and aided Samuel Haight from the beginning, literally absorb the brunt of the Paradox explosion. They appear unharmed, and even seem pleased by the experience. If Shaitan is around when the Staff explodes, he will be gone when the dust settles.

This does not mean that the Troupe doesn't suffer. 10 levels of Aggravated Damage rip through the air, tearing into the town of Paraiso Vista and warping reality wherever the wave of power touches. The entire side of the mountain on which Paraiso Vista rests is devastated. The characters can use their appropriate defenses to attempt soaking the damage, or in the case of mages, deflecting the damage or Co-locating to a safe distance.



The Land Transformed

And if the music stops
There's only the sound of the rain;
All the hope and glory
All the sacrifice in vain.
If love remains
Though everything is lost
We will pay the price,
But we will not count the cost.

— Rush, "Bravado"

If and when the Staff explodes, the chances of any character coming through that explosion unharmed are very slim, and most may be near death. But the characters should live through the explosion. What's the point of defeating Samuel Haight if they all die in the process? Courage and determination have brought them here; let the characters and the players revel in their victory; fair is fair.

The Marauders, always good sports about these things, will move any incapacitated characters to another area, not far from the mountain. Why? Just because. They need no reason for their actions; it would seem like the proper thing to do.

The land has changed around them; rocks have liquefied and run, solidifying again but radiating no heat. Trees have crystallized, and living animals have mutated, some for the better, most for the worse. At the very epicenter of the Paradox explosion, a skeleton stands, untouched by the force of the blast. The skeleton is all that remains of Samuel Haight. The Skinner is dead. The brittle bones are fused into one solid lump. There is a hideous odor, like burnt hair and stagnant water, wafting from the remains.

There is no sign of Shaitan.

The Skin Dancers and fomori are dead. The mortal remains of Paraiso Vista's people, if they were in the path of Shaitan or the battle, are freezing cold to the touch. As they thaw, the bodies rapidly putrefy. The wraiths that were here are gone as well. In Paraiso Vista all is peaceful again. Too peaceful, perhaps.

Aftermath



*It's still getting worse after everything I tried
What if I found a way to wash it all inside?*

— Nine Inch Nails, "Sanctified"

The Skinner is dead, driven too far at last by his mad dreams. But his death is hardly the end. Mexico City is in the midst of an upheaval that could shake the very foundations of the World of Darkness.

• The Technocracy dismisses the events of the past days as a civil uprising, followed by blackout, rioting, and a massive earthquake. Hundreds may be dead; thousands more are homeless. A crackdown begins among the Sleeper community; there must be scapegoats found and punished for the bombings. Most mortals will accept these explanations and rebuild as they always have. Not everyone will, however. The Inquisition and Celestial Chorus will soon be receiving an influx of new believers. And journalists worldwide will search for answers...

• The Underbelly of the Wyrm was held in unity because Shaitan manipulated the leaders of the Sepulchre into trusting each other. That connection is gone now. If the Pandemonium was attacked, the servants of the entity will no longer have a place of power to call their own. Where will they go? How will they survive?

• The Technocracy still intends to destroy the supernaturals that do not fit into their world as easily as the Technomancers desire. But they have a few new problems of their own. The Conventions cannot tolerate so blatant an assault, even by their own forces. At least a few of the leaders in Mexico City are likely on their way out. Who will replace them, and whom can the Technocracy trust to handle their affairs in Mexico City?

• Mexico's Tapestry has been badly rent; it will be months before the odd occurrences, "shallowings" and spon-

taneous Awakenings taper off. This may be both a good and a bad thing for the Ascension War.

• The Sabbat have lost a great many of their numbers, and the war still rages on. The Kindred of Mexico City were, perhaps, too certain of their power base. One man has brought violent change to the Sabbat's capital in the Americas. Which Kindred met Final Death? Who survived to rule the area? How will the Sabbat deal with the Technocracy's plans to destroy them?

• The Samedi and Giovanni just may decide to stick around. With so much confusion, infiltrating the Sabbat could well be easier now than at any other time. But just what are their plans in the long run? Just whom do these Kindred answer to when all is said and done?

• The Bone Gnawers of the Sweet Water Sept have suffered as few Garou ever have before. In the Blight-ridden city that has always been their home, they have watched all that they cared for thrown into the winds of war and chaos. Are they strong enough to continue their battle in a city controlled by the Wyrm?

• Pentex has survived the destruction with little damage. The people they lost can be replaced and their factories are well insured. True, they've lost a few dozen fomori, but there are always more humans willing to make the same mistakes. NAFTA still holds so much potential, and the people in the best position to take advantage of NAFTA are already in the city, planning their next move. Can anyone stop Pentex before all is lost?

• Where did Shaitan go, and what will happen if he succeeds in his plans? How much harm can the Thirteen eldest Ba'ali do if they are united in their efforts to bring about Gehenna?

The answers to all these questions and more, dear Storyteller, are up to you.

Appendix One: Characters

*Darkness in the morning
Shadows in the land
Certain individuals
Aren't sticking to the plan*
— Warren Zevon, "Searching for a Heart"

Characters are the heart of any storytelling game; this appendix presents important character information for *Chaos Factor* Storytellers. Part One details Shaitan and Samuel Haight. Part Two gives the Storyteller a variety of

quick-reference statistics for general encounters along the way, and Part Three describes the new werewolf tribe, Samuel Haight's Skin Dancers.

Part One: Main Characters



Several characters play key roles in "The Chaos Factor." While important figures in Mexico City are described in Chapter Three, the two main figures in the story itself are detailed below.

Shaitan

Sire: Ashur

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Visionary

Clan: Ba'ali

Generation: 4th

Embrace: 4500 B.C.

Apparent Age: 20

Physical: Strength 7 (9), Dexterity 6 (8), Stamina 7 (9)

Social: Charisma 8, Manipulation 9, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 6, Wits 7

Talents: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Diplomacy 6, Dodge 5, Dreaming 7, Empathy 6, Intrigue 9, Leadership 8, Mimicry 6, Public Speaking 3, Sense Deception 9, Search 5, Seduction 4, Subterfuge 9, Throwing 2

Skills: Blacksmith 2, Blind Fighting 3, Body Alteration 6, Bribery 9, Camouflage 3, Etiquette 1, Melee 5, Survival 9, Torture 9, Tracking 6, Traps 3

Knowledges: Alchemy 3, Anthropology 7, Archaeology 9, Area Knowledge (Mexico, Mesopotamia) 9, Astrology 3, Astronomy 1, Black Hand Knowledge 5, Camarilla Lore 3, City Secrets 9, Kindred Lore 9, Lupine Lore 5, Mage Lore 4, Medicine 5, Occult (Demonic Lore) 9, Psychology 3, Politics 8, Sabbat Lore 9, Sewer Lore 3, Spirit Lore 9, Theology 9 (Always know your enemy), Toxicology 6, Wurm Lore 9

Virtues: Treachery 5, Cruelty 5, Courage 5

Disciplines (Normal ranking; reduce by 2 when freshly awakened): Animalism 6, Auspex 9, Celerity 6, Chimestry 6, Daimonon 9, Dark Thaumaturgy 7, Dementation 8, Dominate 9, Fortitude 7, Obtenebration 4, Presence 9, Protean 7, Potence 9, Thaumaturgy 4, Visceratika 3

Investments: 9 (Infernal Ranking)

Backgrounds: Alternate Identity, Allies 9, Contacts 9, Herd 9, Influence 9, Resources 4, Retainers 9, Status 9

Path of Enlightenment: Path of Evil Revelations 10 (see below)

Humanity: 0

Willpower: 10

Derangements: Obsession; Shaitan feels that he must corrupt all of humanity to please Baal. Naturally, he is right.

Blood Pool: 50/10

Background: Shaitan was born in 4520 BC as a slave in what the Kindred now refer to as the Second City. Beautiful beyond comparison, his beauty alone elevated him in rank as a favored servant of Ashur. Shaitan was the second to be embraced by Ashur, and was incorrigible.

Not long after his embrace, Shaitan left the city and traveled to the east, through Mesopotamia and into the lands of Kala-At-Sherghat. While on his journey, he learned much of the strange Eastern philosophies, refining Disciplines that had never existed before. These he taught to the fellow Childe of Ashur, all save for Gangrel, whom he loathed. Gangrel took the slight personally, and pointed out to Ashur that Shaitan had been twisted by consorting with the Children of Lillith, a direct breach of Caine's commandments. Word of this soon passed among all of the Kindred in the Second City, and, against Ashur's will, Shaitan and his followers were banished.

Shaitan went east again, and soon built a city of his own in Kala-At-Sherghat, following his own rules and conquering many surrounding lands. Then Shaitan met Baal, a powerful, greedy demon willing to teach the vampire a few new tricks. Shaitan swore fealty to Baal, feeling that he had been mistreated by his own kind and willing to serve another to get revenge.

At Baal's command, Shaitan expanded his nation even further, starting great sacrifices to Baal's glory and forcing many of the smaller tribes into slavery. Perhaps he would have continued ruling the area for all time, but the Second City fell, and with its fall, it brought a flood of other Kindred into the area. By the time the other Kindred arrived, Shaitan's rule was well established, and he and his brethren were treated as gods by the people in the area. Although he still made sacrifices to Baal, the demon had long since left the area. Shaitan had no support when the Ashurians, Assamites and Brujah came to the area and decided to make it their own.

The Baali, as Shaitan and his brethren had taken to calling themselves, were few in number and had remained that way. The majority of newly-Embraced Kindred were ritually slaughtered for their blood, their hearts given over to Baal. The Brujah and Assamite forces, along with the Ashurians, overthrew them with ease—perhaps too much ease. The Baali were destroyed, down to the last one... or so it seemed.



In truth, Baal had warned Shaitan and his fellows of the danger that was coming from the west, and they had vacated the area, leaving demonically-altered childer behind to be sacrificed in their stead.

The Baali scattered to the four corners of the earth; each of the 13 eldest took a number of their Get with them and began setting new goals for their plans of vengeance and power. Baal's warning was taken to heart, and the Baali learned the art of subtlety. No longer conquering any area and claiming dominion, they chose false names instead, often those of preexisting gods. In the guise of these local gods, the Baali guided the hands of their worshippers and grew in power.

Shaitan began a long voyage across the ocean to reach the North American Continent. From the time of the Olmecs (1200 - 200 BC) through the times of the Toltecs, the Mayans and all of the Aztec Empire's history, Shaitan was there, often guiding subtly through retainers and taking a direct hand in the battles for supremacy. Other Kindred came to the area, ignorant of Shaitan's presence; these interloping Kindred were either driven away, corrupted into service or destroyed.

For more than 2,700 years, Shaitan ruled over the area where Mexico stands today, either in person or by proxy. He still rules over the area — he simply has chosen not to make a public appearance in 400 years. This is about to change.

Image: Shaitan stands almost eight feet tall. Due to his long association with Baal, his body has gone through physical changes that have left him as hideous as any Nosferatu. His skin is a translucent white with a texture similar to sandpaper. While his hair has become something akin to fine tendrils, his eyes are slitted like those of a reptile and his face has taken on demonic characteristics, including ram horns growing out of his skull. A palpable aura of evil can be sensed by virtually everyone he encounters.

Roleplaying Hints: You do not talk to fools. Anyone who does not succumb to your power is not worth acknowledging, unless he has True Faith. Ignore the weak; destroy the strong.

Notes: This Methuselah is ridiculously strong. His long torpor has reduced many of his formidable skills, but given time, he will attain almost godlike power. The Troupe will have an edge when dealing with him, however; his knowledge of modern weaponry is academic. He has been in Torpor for so long he has forgotten the sting of fire and the might of magick. Faced with determined resistance, he will flee and plot his revenge at a later time. His Attributes and Disciplines have also been reduced by his long slumber. When he awakens, Shaitan is comparatively weak. It will take several months for him to regain his true power.

While Shaitan fully follows the Path of Evil Revelations, he is not a member of the Sabbat. Shaitan has been tutored by Baal to open his mind to the possibilities of his power. His extremely high Disciplines reflect his teachings. Shaitan long since gave his soul to Baal, and is very much a pawn of demons; he is effectively a demon in a vampiric body.



Samuel Haight

*This time you've gone too far,
This time you've gone too far,
This time you've gone too far,
I told you,
I told you,
I told you,
I told you*

— Peter Gabriel, "Digging In The Dirt"

Breed: Homid

Tribe: Outcast — he thinks of himself as the first of the Skin Dancer Tribe.

Tradition: Orphan

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Architect

Essence: Dynamic

Auspice: Theurge



Physical: Strength 5 (7/9/8/6), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 5 (7/8/8/7)

Social: Charisma 5, Manipulation 5 (4/3/2/2), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urge 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Drive 2, Firearms 5, Meditation 4, Melee 4, Leadership 5, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Computer 2, Enigmas 4, Investigation 4, Linguistics 3, Occult 5, Politics 4, Rituals 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Avatar 5, Fetish 5, Library 4, Resources 5

Willpower 9, Arete 5, Rage 10, Gnosis 8 (Quintessence 8/Paradox 2)

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 3, Forces 3, Life 2, Matter 3, Prime 2, Spirit 4

Fetishes/Talismans: The Staff of the World Tree

Level: N/A, **Arete:** 6, **Quintessence:** (see below)

Special Power: Countermagick (Dice Total: 9)

Sphere Rotes/Effects: Divided Sight, Ripple through Space (Correspondence); Slay Machine, Erode Matter (Entropy); Darksight, System Havoc, Elemental Blast (Forces 3, Prime 2) (Forces); Sense Life, Mold Tree, Better Body, Rip the Man-Body (Life); Sense Quintessence, Channel Quintessence (Prime)

Note: For simplicity, roll 3 dice for vulgar effects and 6 for coincidental ones.

Samuel Haight has no idea just how much power he holds in his hands, nor has he any clue as to just how fragile that power is. The staff is used by Haight primarily as a device for countermagick: it adds 4 dice of power to every countermagick roll that he makes. The staff is charged with over 200 points of Quintessence, but each time Haight uses the staff to defend against more than one attack at a time, the energies within the staff are converted at a geometric rate from Quintessence to Paradox. In truth, the staff should not exist; it is a Paradox within itself. Haight is about to discover this the hard way.

Gifts: Bane Protector, Wyrm Hide, Unseelie Faerie Kin, Blood Omen, Heightened Senses, Curse of Aeolus, Visceral Agony, Razor Claws, Thieving Talons of the Magpie, Inspiration

Thaumaturgy: Samuel Haight knows several Thaumaturgic paths and rituals, most of which can be found in the *Vampire: The Masquerade* rulebook. These minor magics do not invoke Paradox, but he cannot augment them with Quintessence or his staff. The Paths he has studied are Movement of Mind 3, Lure of Flames 2, Weather Control 2 and Spirit Thaumaturgy 1. He also knows the following rites: the Ritual of Sacred Rebirth, Donning the Mask of Shadows, Puissant Shield and Ward Against Lupines (he's still a bit leery of trying that last one; it might affect him!).

Background: Samuel Haight was a Kinfolk of the Garou, but was never satisfied with just being Kinfolk. Haight's father and his cousins, the Carney Brothers, had known the glory of being Garou, and Samuel Haight resented their existence. Sam tried many times to gain his father's respect in other ways, but truth be known, he was always something of a disappointment.

He finally found something that he was truly good at — hunting. He hunted big game the world over, stalking and killing every type of dangerous prey imaginable. From other Kinfolk, Sam learned about the other supernatural powers that existed. His fascination with the occult even led him to try learning from the Verbena, but to no avail; he could not manage their difficult rituals. In the words of his teacher, his "Avatar would not Awaken."

Haight continued in his quest, eventually leading him against a vampire he assaulted and managed to kill. Samuel took the vampire's blood when he left. He had learned in his travels that the blood of vampires was healing and life-extending. He also took all of the books of magic that the vampire possessed. Through trial and error, bolstered by the rich vitæ, he started teaching himself the art of Thaumaturgy.

As he traveled the world, learning more of the Thaumaturgic arts and hunting more and more exotic creatures, Haight ran across a Ritual that changed his life. The Ritual of Sacred Rebirth, found in the possession of a dark cult in India, taught Samuel that he could take control of all aspects of his life. With the ritual, Samuel Haight could become a Garou himself... if he was willing to pay the price. With the skins of five Garou, he could become a werewolf. (This is detailed in the adventure "Skins" from Valkenberg Foundation.)

Samuel Haight slaughtered and skinned the necessary number of Garou and used the ritual. In the process, he became a pawn of the Wyrm. Chased by other Garou, Haight used a powerful fetish, Shedding the Spirit Skin, which allowed him to escape into the Umbra. Faced with the truth of his actions, he went somewhat mad.

Using his fetish, Haight fled into the Deep Umbra and into the lair of Ischen, a powerful demon locked into a section of the Umbra ages before by the Garou. The creature desired a way back to the material plane and felt that the fetish was a perfect way to escape. The unintentional intervention of several Sabbat vampires foiled the creature's attempts and allowed Samuel Haight back into the material world. (For information, see "A Quest Beyond Death" in *The Storytellers Handbook to the Sabbat*.)

Haight, now known as "The Skinner," had worked for Pentex before his "rebirth" and saw no reason not to return to his previous employers upon coming home. Through Pentex, Haight met Robert Allred, and the two became comrades-in-arms. It was Allred who sent the Skinner to the

Amazon Basin, realizing that the bloody battle zone would be a fabulous place to gather more pelts for the creation of still more Kinfolk-Garou. By tapping into the resentment of many Kinfolk, Haight hoped to create a new tribe for Pentex, a tribe called the Skin Dancers.

While locked in Ischen's domain, Sam learned several new tricks from his host. What he did not learn from the demon, he stole from the Dreamspeaker Oracle El Dorado, using the power of a fetish called the Conquistador's Sword. The Sword was meant to steal El Dorado's power, but shattered in the attempt, leaving Samuel Haight with a rudimentary level of knowledge in several Spheres. Some believed that Haight had been destroyed in his battle against the Garou in the Dorado Realm, but once again, he managed to escape what should have been his death by slipping into the Umbra when the werewolves saw him apparently torn apart by elementals of the Wyld. (See "In Dreams and Nightmares" from *Rage Across the Amazon* for more details.)

The Skinner was next seen when he attacked the Crombey Farm Chantry. Haight meant to barter for the right to learn from the Verbena, but the Chantry's leader, Alistair Crombey, refused him. With the help of a Chantry member who betrayed his family, Haight was able to rip the power of the Chantry's World Tree away, taking a branch of the tree as a source for the power's containment. In the process, he murdered Crombey's wife, Allison, and gained the enmity of the Verbena Tradition. (This has been chronicled in "The Salesman's Tale" in *The Book of Chantries*.)

A few months later, Haight appeared in New Orleans, this time coming to the aid of the Camarilla. He informed the Kindred of a vampiric slaving ring and gained the friendship of several Kindred. Only a few

Storyteller Notes

Many statistics, such as Background or Rites, may be ignored in short encounters. Gifts and magicks may be represented "off the cuff" by Storyteller improvisation, but remember to use judgment and consistency when making up the effects.

You might, when running large combats, simply assign a certain amount of "good hits" necessary to take opponents down. Instead of rolling soaks against damage, simply decide how much punishment a character can take. A beginning Black Spiral Dancer, for instance, might take two "good hits" of four or more Health Levels before dropping. A more powerful Dancer might require four or more shots of four Health Levels before he goes down. This suggestion is purely optional, but may streamline large fights.

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A few months later, Haight appeared in New Orleans, this time coming to the aid of the Camarilla. He informed the Kindred of a vampiric slaving ring and gained the friendship of several Kindred. Only a few weeks prior to this tale, Haight encountered a small Orphan Chantry, slaughtering the mages inside and forcing the power of their Node into his Staff. (This occurs in the adventure "D'jabbic" in *New Orleans by Night*.)

Haight has decided to end his battles. He has discovered lore that will now lead him to he thinks is an Antediluvian's Haven (the Fourth Generation Kindred is actually a Methuselah, but Haight doesn't know the difference). With the blood he hopes to obtain, Haight plans to drop from sight and expand his Skin Dancer tribe. He does not realize that peace is beyond his reach; he has overstepped the laws of gods, man and creation. Now his soul is ravaged by madness, his mind is drifting into Quiet, and his power is threatened by Paradox. Haight is running on borrowed time, and his final race fuels Shaitan's awakening. The chaos and death he causes may very well herald the beginning of Gehenna...

Image: Samuel Haight is a middle-aged man with hazel eyes and brown hair shot through with gray. He is in excellent physical condition, but trembles with exhaustion. His muscles, in Crinos and Lopus forms, ripple beneath a brown coat shot with gray. His face is drawn with physical exhaustion and scars cover his body. To those whom he has battled before, he looks less in control than ever before.

Roleplaying Notes: So many battles, so many deaths. You have so much to correct, so much to change, and your work has only just begun. Still, it all seems worth it. You hold in your hands the power of God. The energies that throb within both the staff and your own being beckon you onward; you need only learn how to harness them. For that, you need time. In order to continue learning before you have grown old, you need the blood of a powerful Kindred. Nothing must stop you. Your destiny is clear.

Notes: Samuel Haight must die.

The method of his death can be as dramatic or as ignominious as your Troupe prefers, but he must not be



Part Two: Background Characters



The Chaos Factor involves hundreds of supernatural beings. Obviously, we cannot present statistics for each of them; the listings below will give the Storyteller some basic background.

The following write-ups represent three ranks of supernatural beings for encounters within the story. Most encountered beings will come from the first rank given below, especially if they are vampires created by the Sabbat as cannon fodder. Specific individuals are given in Book One, Chapter Two.

Golems

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 2, Stamina 8, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 0, Wits 0

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Intimidation 4

Health: OK, OK, OK, -1, -1, -1, -2, -2, -3, -4, -5, Incapacitated

Countermagick: The golems add 4 to all countermagick rolls.

Image: The golems are large, heavy figures made of clay instead of flesh. Their skin is moist and their faces are stern. They do not speak and they do not change their facial expressions.

Garou

The following statistics represent three different levels of Garou: Newly Changed, Average and Leader.

Pup: Newly Changed

Breed: Any, but probably homid for Bone Gnawers and metis for Black Spiral Dancers

Auspice: Any

Tribe: Either Bone Gnawer (1) or Black Spiral Dancer (2)

Physical: Strength 3 (5/7/6/5), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2 (2/0/0/0), Appearance 2 (1/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Intimidation 1,

Skills: Melee 1, Repair 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Linguistics 1, Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 2

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 2, Mentor 1

Gifts: (1) Scent of Sweet Honey, one Auspice Gift, one Breed Gift/ (2) Shroud, one Auspice Gift, one Breed Gift

Rank: 1

Rage 5, Gnosis 2, Willpower 5

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Average Werewolf

Breed: As above

Auspice: Any

Tribe: Bone Gnawer or Black Spiral Dancer

Physical: Strength 4 (6/8/7/5), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (5/6/6/5),

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 4 (3/0/4/4)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urges 1, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Melee 2, Leadership 2, Repair 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 4, Enigmas 2, Linguistics 2, Medicine 1

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 2, Contacts 4

Gifts: (1) four first level (2) three second level (3) one or two third level

Rank: 2 or 3

Rage 6, Gnosis 8, Willpower 6

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Rites: (Pick 2 or 3) Talisman Dedication, Rite of Contrition, Rite of Spirit Awakening, Rite of the Fetish, Rite of Summoning

Fetishes: Varies by individual: 1 fetish, or 2 to 3 talens

Leader

Breed: As above

Auspice: Any

Tribe: Bone Gnawers or Black Spiral Dancers

Physical: Strength 5 (7/9/6/6), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 4 (6/7/7/6)

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5 (4/2/2/2), Appearance 2 (0/0/2/2)

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 4, Intimidation 3, Primal-Urges 4, Subterfuge 5

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Leadership 4, Performance 3, Repair 4, Stealth 5, Survival 5

Knowledges: Area Knowledge (Mexico City) 5, Enigmas 4, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 3, Rituals 3

Backgrounds: Kinfolk 2, Contacts 5

Gifts: (1) six first level; (2) five second level; (3) three third level; (4) two fourth level; (5) one or two fifth level

Rank: 4 or 5

Rage 8, Gnosis 8, Willpower 8

Health Levels: OK, -1, -1, -2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Rites: Rite of Burial, Rite of Contrition, Rite of Fetishes, Rite of Ostracism, Rite of Passage

Fetishes: 2 to 3 fetishes and 2 to 5 talens.

Fetishes: Mask of Death (Level 5, Gnosis 8); The Bone Gnawers of Mexico City have a special fetish that they have designed, and each member of the Sweet Waters Sept has one. The Mask of Death is actually a simple wooden mask carved in the shape of a skull. Each Mask allows the person wearing it to simply be ignored by everyone around them. While wearing the Masks, the Bone Gnawers can be in any form and still not worry about being noticed. It is not uncommon, during the Days of the Dead, for the entire sept to walk the streets in Crinos form, ready to meet any potential threat. So long as they make no violent action against their targets, they are simply overlooked. If a Garou wearing the Mask attacks someone, however, the power of the fetish no longer hides the Garou from his target.

Kindred

The following statistics are for average Kindred of 13th Generation, 11th Generation and 8th Generation.

Generation: 13th

Clan: Any of the Sabbat

Embrace: Within the last 50 years

Apparent Age: Varies

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Talents: Acting 1, Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Melee 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Sabbat Lore 1

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 2, Morale 2

Disciplines: One point in any three to four Disciplines

Backgrounds: Resources 1, Contacts 2, Allies 3

Path: 1 in any Path

Willpower: 5

Blood Pool: 10/1

Generation: 11th

Clan: Any

Embrace: Within the last 75 years

Apparent Age: Varies

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Acting 2, Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Melee 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 2, Medicine 5, Occult 2, Politics 3, Sabbat Lore 3

Virtues: Callousness 3, Instincts 3, Morale 4

Disciplines: Seven dots in any five Disciplines

Backgrounds: Resources 3, Contacts 4, Allies 5

Path: 5 in any Path

Willpower: 7

Blood Pool: 12/1

Generation: 8th

Clan: Any

Embrace: Anytime within the last 200 years

Apparent Age: Varies

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Acting 4, Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Intimidation 5, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 4, Melee 3, Music 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Knowledges: Bureaucracy 4, Medicine 5, Occult 2, Politics 2, Sabbat Lore 5

Virtues: Callousness 4, Instincts 5, Morale 4

Disciplines: Nine to 11 dots in any seven Disciplines

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Contacts 5, Influence 3

Path: 7 in any Path, probably the path of Evil Revelations in Mexico City

Willpower: 8

Blood Pool: 15/3

Mages

The following statistics are given as examples of Newly-Awakened Mages, Experienced Mages and Chantry Leaders. There are very few mages in Mexico City who are not described in Chapter Two.

Newly-Awakened Mage

Essence: Questing

Tradition: Any

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Expression 2, Intuition 3, Intimidation 1,

Skills: Etiquette 1, Firearms 1, Meditation 2, Research 2

Knowledges: Cosmology 2, Enigmas 2, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Occult 1

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Forces 2, Prime 2 (or any other combination of six Spheres)

Backgrounds: Avatar 2, Destiny 1, Library 1, Mentor 2
Arete 3, Willpower 6, Quintessence 11, Paradox 3

Experienced Mages

Essence: Questing

Tradition/Faction: Any (usually Nephandi, Dreamspeaker or Technocracy)

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Expression 2, Intuition 3, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 3, Meditation 5, Research 4, Survival 2

Knowledges: Computer 3, Cosmology 3, Culture 4, Enigmas 5, Medicine 3, Occult 5, Science 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Forces 2, Life 2, Mind 3, Prime 3 (or any combination of 6 to 12 in the Spheres, with one or two being prominent)

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 3, Chantry 4, Dream 1, Influence 2, Library 3, Mentor 5

Arete 5, Willpower 8, Quintessence 15, Paradox 4

Chantry Leaders

Essence: Any

Tradition: Any

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5

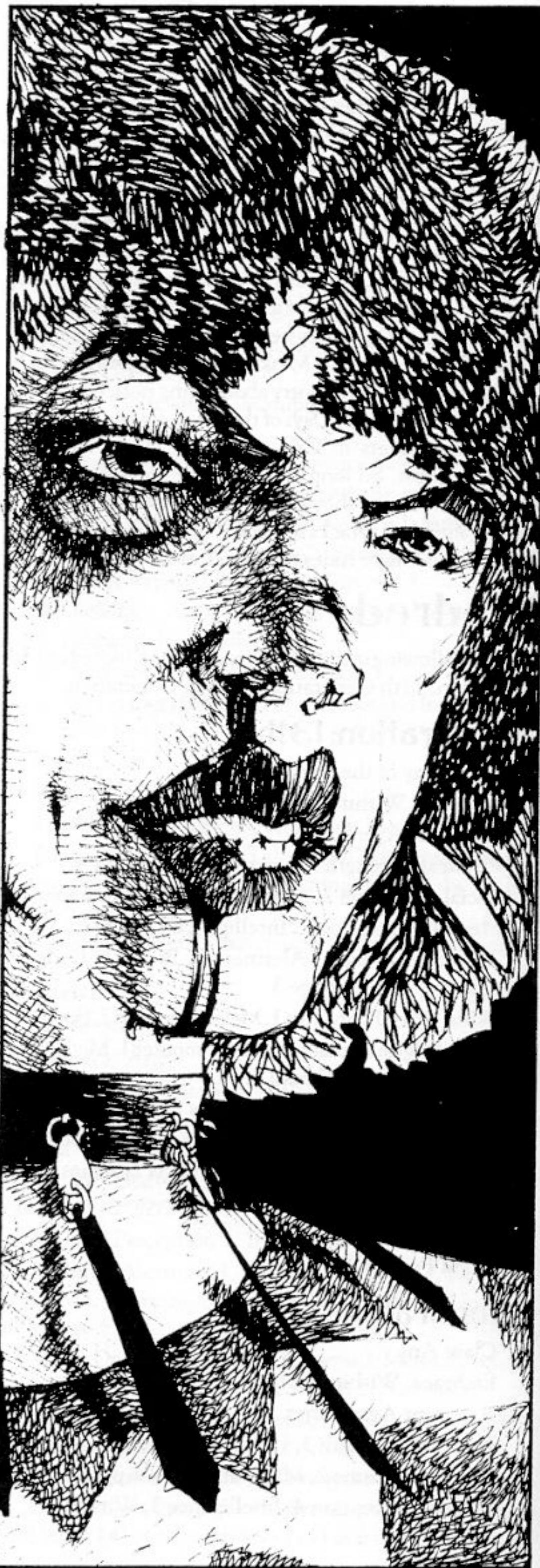
Skills: Drive 2, Firearms 3, Meditation 5, Melee 2, Research 5, Survival 5, Stealth 5, Technology 5,

Knowledges: Computer 4, Cosmology 5, Enigmas 5, Investigation 4, Law 4, Linguistics 5, Medicine 4, Occult 5, Science 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 2, Forces 3, Life 3, Matter 4, Mind 2, Prime 5, Spirit 2, Time 1 (or any combination of Spheres, 15 to 25 points. Chantry mages have little time for trivial matters.)

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Avatar 4, Chantry 5, Dream 4, Influence 4, Library 5, Node 5, Talisman 4

Arete 8, Willpower 10, Quintessence 17, Paradox 2



Part Three: The Skin Dancers



*Across the abyss
This weary traveler struggles on
Casting his eyes upon the ground, he cries out,
"Is there no end to this immortal pain that haunts
me?"*

— Christian Death, "The Path of Sorrows"

Skin Dancers are false Garou created by the Ritual of Sacred Rebirth, a forbidden Wyrm ritual that transforms Kinfolk into Garou by using the skin and blood of true werewolves. The Skin Dancers can only be created from Garou Kinfolk; attempts to try the ritual with non-Kinfolk will simply fail.

These "reborn" werewolves begin their existence at least mildly corrupted by the Wyrm, but the path they choose to follow after their "rebirth" is entirely in their own hands. Created, as they are, from the bodies of born Garou, the taint of corruption hangs about them. Some few, however, overcome this and join the ranks of their cousins. For any Skin Dancer, the path is there. The will to walk away from the Wyrm and avoid its traps is within the hearts of all Skin Dancers.

Contrary to common conceptions, the Skin Dancers are not associated with the Black Spiral Dancers. The latter have danced themselves to madness within the Black Spiral, giving themselves completely to the Wyrm. They are, with a few possible exceptions, beyond redemption. Skin Dancers, however, can rise above their beginnings and reject the Wyrm. Whereas the Black Spiral Dancers suffer from insanity as a result of their acceptance of the Wyrm, the Skin Dancers are as sane as their circumstances allow. The Black Spirals, and most other tribes for that matter, regard the Skin Dancers as "false Garou" and often attack them on sight. The bastard progeny of "Skinner" Haight have a hard road ahead of them if anyone discovers the truth of their rebirth.

Skin Dancers do not normally have Gifts, as they have not aligned themselves with a particular set of Banes or spirits. It is possible for the Skin Dancers to learn Gifts, but at this point they must be taught by other Garou or spirits. Given the enmity real Garou bear towards the Skin Dancers, this is a difficult arrangement to make. Some Wyrm-tainted Skin Dancers learn Gifts from Banes in exchange for favors, but the majority rely on physical power over spirit aid. Certain Backgrounds also do not apply to Skin Dancers. No Skin Dancer can have Past Life or Pure Breed, and very few have the Fetish Background (if they do, they likely stole their fetishes from a victim), Kinfolk, Rites or Totem.

The Bastard Tribe are not, as some suppose, shapeshifting mages. They are Garou, albeit false ones in many senses of the word. None have displayed any ability with the Spheres of True Magick. The only exception is

Samuel Haight himself. The Skinner quite literally stole the ability to perform magick by severing a portion of El Dorado's Avatar with the Conquistador's Sword. The artifact was destroyed during the "exchange," and no other Skin Dancer could hope to use the powerful fetish again. Samuel Haight is the exception, not the rule.

Skin Dancers, as a rule, do not have the strong sense of tradition and belonging that their "legitimate" cousins share. The other tribes, even the Black Spiral Dancers, have codes of ethics and rules that guide them in their lives. The Bastard Tribe have not been around long enough to develop their own guidelines. The Skin Dancers are a tribe of Ronin, unaccepted by the other tribes and unwilling to bend to the beliefs of most Garou.

All Skin Dancers feel obligated to Samuel Haight to one degree or another, but not all of them hold to Haight's twisted philosophies. The Skin Dancers were originally Kinfolk, and a good number remember how poor their lives were before the rebirth. The difference between humans and Garou are too extreme to describe — the power to venture into the Umbra is something that most humans will never know. To the Skin Dancers, becoming Garou is literally like being reborn — comparable perhaps, only to a mage's Epiphany. More often than not, the bitterness that had crept into their lives as Kinfolk is destroyed with the rebirth. The Skin Dancers have achieved their goals; why should they be bitter? How many of us can truly say we have realized our dreams?

In choosing his disciples, Haight usually selected Kinfolk with a degree of combat skill. Most Skin Dancers are well versed in the martial arts, both with and without weapons, and a substantial number are marksmen as well. The primary Abilities of the Skin Dancers reflect their fighting knowledge. Many are also well-versed in survival techniques and are fully capable of living off the land for the rest of their lives if necessary. Haight chose carefully during his screening process; he understood all too well the risks that his Skin Dancers would have to take.

Most Garou will not hesitate to kill a Skin Dancer on sight. Five Garou have to die before one Skin Dancer is created. Members of the Bastard Tribe have learned quickly, though, and none will openly admit to being a creation of Samuel Haight. The charade is not difficult in these last days. The decent ones, however, feel shame and guilt for the Garou who died so that they might be reborn. As time passes, this new tribe may feel the weight of Harano more deeply than the Thirteen Tribes ever will. Then again, this new blood may shift the balance of the Apocalypse in Gaia's favor if enough Skin Dancers join their cousins in battle. It is still far too soon to know what the fate of the Bastard Tribe will be.

Appendix Two: Rules

Paradox in The Chaos Factor



Paradox runs rampant throughout the second half of "Chaos Factor." The mages go out of their way to try to capture or kill Samuel Haight, while the Technocracy pulls out all the stops and attempts to contain a situation that is beyond control. Even worse, the Paradox Spirits must work overtime to fix the problem before too much damage is done. If the Storyteller desires, she might apply the modifiers to any magick roll difficulties for Effects cast in Mexico City during the crisis. These difficulties, based upon the optional Domino Effect (see *The Book of Shadows*), apply only to Effects cast within Mexico City. Paraíso Vista is unaffected.

The Storyteller may, if she desires, keep magick difficulties at their normal levels and simply substitute nastier

Paradox Backlashes for increased difficulties. The Storyteller should remember that these modifiers are intended to add flavor and suspense, not to punish player characters for using magick. Use judgment and empathy when determining modifiers.

Day of the Dead	Effect
Day 1	Nothing unusual occurs.
Day 2	All attempts at vulgar magick suffer a +1 difficulty.
Day 3	Static magick suffers a +1 difficulty; vulgar magic suffers a +1 difficulty.
Day 4	Static magick suffers a +1 difficulty; vulgar magick suffers a +2 difficulty.
Day 5	Static magick suffers a +2 difficulty; vulgar magick suffers a +4 difficulty.



M.B. KORTELING

Optional Rules for Using Wraiths:

The Restless Dead play a small but significant part in "The Chaos Factor." If the Storyteller does not have the rules for ghosts given in *Wraith: The Oblivion*, she may use the guidelines given below.

These powers may simulate the abilities of the Restless Dead. Like Disciplines, Gifts and Spheres, wraith Arcanos vary from individual to individual; the abilities below are common, but not universal. Story and circumstances can dictate whatever powers and potency a certain ghost might have.

- Wraiths are effectively invisible unless they want to be seen. *Obfuscate* can take the place of this power.
- Wraiths can possess others; *Dominate* or the fourth-rank Mind Effect: *Possession* can take the place of this power.
- Wraiths can walk through walls, and are often intangible. The Matter Sphere or Protean 5: *Gaseous Form* can be used in place of this power. Wraiths, however, can actually attack from their gaseous form.
- Wraiths can inspire chilling fear or other emotions in their targets. This ability can be replaced by the Mind Sphere or the Dominate Discipline.

A Society of Supernaturals



The supernatural residents of the World of Darkness come from drastically divergent backgrounds. Few of them can really hope to comprehend Awakened beings from unusual backgrounds, and sometimes just understanding how they think can be a difficult task. Mages do not really understand the Kindred, and the Kindred certainly do not understand the Garou. Many supernatural beings believe they understand wraiths; many of these "experts" are quite mistaken.

However, the supernaturals all exist in the same world, and despite their best efforts, they must occasionally deal with one another. A great deal of their interactions simply take the form of business transactions, and a substantial amount of what each group believes about their counterparts is nothing more than propaganda.

Remember, a *character* does not necessarily know everything a *player* does. Players can read a variety of sourcebooks for all the Storytellers games, but a character cannot. She is restricted to what she can learn in the confines of her fictional world. If she has no experience with vampires, if there is no library where she can find ancient scrolls speaking of vampiric traditions, then she does not know about those traditions, regardless of whether the *player* has read the Book of Nod.



In fact, the more a player reads in different sourcebooks, the greater the roleplaying challenge becomes. A skilled roleplayer plays dumb when her character runs into a situation where she would have no clues, even if the player has read all about it.

Truth is Hard to Find

Remember that each faction in the World of Darkness is trying to hide the truth from every other faction. Many Kindred deliberately reinforce the stereotypes portrayed in Hollywood movies, primarily as an added layer of defense against their potential enemies. If a Garou believes that a stake through the heart is enough to kill a vampire, that Kindred is likely to have a chance later to escape. Not so if the Lupine decides to tear him limb from limb. If the Garou believes that a crucifix will drive the Kindred away, all the better. Later, the vampire can return at leisure, and preferably with a large group of friends, to finish whatever business was interrupted by the nosy werewolf.

Likewise, if the Kindred wish to believe that a full moon turns all Garou into ravening beasts, let him. While the Leeches may think they are dealing with nothing more than a blood-thirsty savage, a Garou can use its keen instincts and combat savvy to destroy the "agents of the Wyrm."

And if the Kindred and Garou wish to believe that mages are all-powerful, who are the mages to disagree? While it's true that the Awakened can indeed become nearly godlike in power as they progress, they are still stuck with the fear of Paradox. Paradox can, and often does, humble even the greatest of mages.

However, Paradox and the spirits that shape it completely ignore the Kindred and the Garou. Why? Many mages believe that vampires and werewolves remain a part of static reality. Despite the Technocracy's best efforts, the undead and shapechangers of the past have not faded from the beliefs of the Sleepers; racial memories of the Impergium strengthen the Delirium of the Garou, and Kindred can use Disciplines to prey on the collective unconscious of the Masses. Mages, however, push the limits of static reality, often breaking the rules in an effort to redefine those rules. The off-the-cuff reality-bending of True Magick contrasts with the static effects of vampiric Disciplines and Garou Gifts, which work in a predetermined way every time. Gifts and Disciplines slightly ripple the Tapestry, while magick radically alters the pattern.

Mages, in short, suffer from major flaws, so they'll take any advantage they can get. If the other supernaturals choose to believe that sorcerers are nearly omnipotent, so much the better. There's less chance that they'll be proven wrong. No Garou wants to be turned into silver by a mage, and no mage in his right mind wants to risk the Paradox that such an action would cause. If the werewolves believe that mages are obviously capable of such incredible displays, the Awakened intend to keep it that way. If the werewolves knew for certain that the mages could be killed by something as simple as a sharp set of fangs, they just might decide that the time has come to remove all those annoying sorcerers from Gaia's reality.

A Disparity of Vision

Despite the propaganda on all sides, conflicts are almost unavoidable in the World of Darkness. Too many of the supernaturals are too set in their ways to accept another creature's perceptions. The Kindred and the Garou are almost entirely set on different courses; vampires need larger herds of humans, while most Garou would prefer fewer humans and more untouched nature. Even among their own kind, each of these groups has a set way of viewing the world and a set belief in what will make the world a better place. How can they hope to live in peace when their desires and beliefs are so opposed to one another? Simply put, they cannot. Some factions of each group can work together for a brief time, but probably not for long. There's too much spilled blood in their mutual histories for them to all agree — most of these groups don't even get along with each other, let alone potentially threatening outsiders.

When you add the magickally aware into the equation, things only get worse. Most mages want to bring about the Ascension, a time when all humans will have the power to shape a better world together. Sadly, most other supernatural beings see Ascension in a different light. The Kindred certainly don't want Ascension; without the Sleepers, they would have no way to feed, and the Awakened just might not like the idea of being used as a food source. The Garou are truly opposed to most of the ideals of Ascension, as the humans have caused more than enough grief without the added power of "enlightenment." What sort of madness would the humans cause if they all had the power to change reality whenever they wanted? Who would suffer if any one segment of humankind could remake the world to fit their own beliefs of what reality should be? How with this affect Gaia, and what would happen to Gaia's warriors? No, alliances between the various factions of the supernaturals simply do not last well; their visions are too different for long-standing cooperation.

With Great Power

For the Kindred and Garou, these rules of avoidance are long since established, but for the Awakened, the rules are not set in stone. The world is a nasty place to be if you have no power, and a nastier place still if you only have a little. Power means that you get noticed. Getting noticed means you can no longer avoid conflicts. Mages should not attempt to fight the Kindred or the Garou on equal grounds — they will lose.

Even a strong member of the Akashic Brotherhood has little chance of besting a werewolf in hand-to-hand combat. Garou are killing machines, and more than capable of beating a talented mage in a fist fight. Frankly, the average Garou can take the average member of the Akashic Brotherhood and beat him to death with the mage's own hands — directly after ripping the mage's arms from his sockets. Coincidental magick is the best way to go. You don't run the risk of Paradox, at least not as heavily, and you can simply avoid being hit while you arrange for a live wire or two to fall on the monster's head.

In a magickal battle, the Garou can use their Gifts against the mage's Spheres, and can soak most outright damage a mage tosses at them. All of the Garou's Gifts fall under the heading of Spirit powers; they are taught these Gifts by spirits. Countermagick is tricky, though possible, if the mage in question lacks knowledge of the Spirit Sphere (see *The Book Of Shadows* for rules about countermagick with alternative Spheres).

Because the Kindred do not have to worry about Paradox, they pose a real threat to mages as well. Each of the Disciplines can be countered, but the power of the mage must be compared with the power of the Leech (see below). Vampires, because they are practically immortal, make very poor enemies. No mage in her right mind would dare face a powerful elder without a few non-Paradoxical weapons, so being armed never hurts.

The World of Darkness and the Storyteller system do have a certain balance, even if that balance is not automatically noticeable. Mages can be extremely powerful, but they also have strong disadvantages to counterbalance that power. Again, Garou and Kindred need not worry about Paradox when they use their Gifts and Disciplines, while mages must beware.

Example

A Nosferatu vampire has Obfuscate 3 and is using Obfuscate 2: Unseen Presence. A Rank Four Garou nearby is attempting to use the (level one) Gift: Sense Wyrm to find any corruption in the area. The Storyteller knows the Nosferatu bears the scent of the Wyrm (the Nosferatu has a low Humanity). If the vampire is using Obfuscate, can the Garou sense him? The Garou is Rank Four, and the Kindred's Discipline rating is only 3, so the Garou has a chance of detecting him.

"Has a chance" is the operative phrase here. This system does not override the existing systems: the ability is not automatic. In other words, the Garou must still roll Perception + Occult (just like any other Garou using Sense Wyrm); if he has no successes, then corruption is not detected. With one success, he will detect the Nosferatu.

Now, what if the Garou were Rank Three? He would have power equal to the Nosferatu's Obfuscate 3. The result would depend on a resisted roll. The Garou would roll Perception + Occult, while the Nosferatu would roll Wits + Stealth (just like any other Kindred using Unseen Presence). Whoever has the most successes wins. If the Nosferatu won, he would remain unseen and undetected. If the Garou won, he would sense the Nosferatu. Ties go to the defender; in this case, the Nosferatu would remain hidden. Since the Garou is the one actively searching, the Nosferatu gains the benefit of a tie.

What if the Garou was only Rank Two? His Gift would not be powerful enough to penetrate the Obfuscate. However, the Storyteller should let the player roll anyway and simply tell her she senses nothing.

Crossover Rules



Some suggested default rules to use in crossover Storyteller games are given below. These are general rules. Particular rules should supersede generalizations, but should still take these guidelines into account. The details given for any particular Discipline, Gift, Sphere or Arcanos should override any statement made below. Storytellers should use their best judgments in such matters, realizing that their decision overrides any rule. Use discretion, and let the story be your guide. The Storyteller should be an artist evoking a consensual reality, not a tyrant armed with rulebooks.

Power Levels

When one character uses a power against another, and the issue of whether the character is powerful enough to pull it off comes up, use this scale: compare a vampire's Discipline rating, a Garou's Rank, a mage's Sphere rating, or a wraith's Arcanos rating. The supernatural with the highest score "wins;" her power is more effective. In the case of ties, a resisted roll is then made.

Note: The scores compared are the being's own ability, not necessarily the level or rating of the power used. In other words, a Kindred with Dominate 4 will use the level one Dominate ability Command the Weary Mind more effectively than a Kindred with Dominate 1. Elements like duration, damage and range do not change, but the effect's potency over other supernaturals does.

Discipline	Garou Rank	Sphere rating*	Arcanos
1	1 (Cliath)	1	1
2	2 (Fostern)	2	2
3	3 (Adren)	3	3
4	4 (Athro)	4	4
5	5 (Elder)	5	5
6+	6+ (Elder)	—	—

* In the case of conjunctive effects, use the highest Sphere rating of the Effect that mage is attempting.

Difficulties

Sometimes, one game will call for a character to defend with a Trait she does not have. For instance, some Garou Gifts have the Rage of the target as the difficulty for the activation roll. Mages don't have Rage. What does the character use instead?

When all else fails, the default difficulty is 6. If the target is actively resisting, the Storyteller can choose to use the character's Willpower rating instead. Willpower is another handy default in the system: it is a Trait shared in all the Storyteller system games. Use common sense; your games should be evocative stories, not math tests.



Direct Magick and Hitting Your Target

Opponents don't always stand still. The targets of direct magickal attacks should, therefore, have some chance to dodge incoming attacks. Direct attacks— lightning bolts, explosions, transformation spells, magick bullets, blasts of holy light—are often vulgar and usually visible. If an opponent can see or sense an incoming magickal Effect, she can elect to dodge that Effect as if it were some normal missile weapon, falling building, etc. If an Order of Hermes mage begins screaming in Latin and waving his arms, sentient beings should take precautions.

Mind attacks may be likewise "dodged" with a Willpower roll in place of the usual dodge if the subject is aware of the attack. The difficulty to resist is 6 (yes, this is a change from the *Mage* rulebook, made for simplicity's sake); each success removes one of the mage's successes.

Physical dodges roll against difficulty of 6 and subtract successes as usual. The magick, therefore, can still have an effect, but it may be much less than what the caster intended. Some Effects may be dodged completely with a good roll, such as a falling boulder or an attacking spirit. Willpower cannot be used to actively "disbelieve" physical attacks.

Any attack that does physical damage can be soaked. Attacks that do direct mental damage cannot be soaked.

This set of rules makes aggressive magick more challenging for the caster and less lethal for the recipient. Mages fighting a HIT Mark with a Force cannon now have options other than countermagick. Likewise, a mage attempting to turn a vampire into a lawn chair would be better off trying some other tactic...

Damage

There are two distinct types of damage in Storyteller games: aggravated and non-aggravated. Most forms of magickal attack do regular (non-aggravated) damage, but there are exceptions. Some supernatural creatures, such as werewolves and vampires, take aggravated damage from attacks like silver or fire in addition to the types below.

Aggravated damage for mages can occur from...

- ...a direct vulgar blast of Prime or damage done from vulgar Life magicks. (Because vulgar Life magicks directly wound a target's inner life-force, they cannot be healed through normal means; hence, they are aggravated wounds. These types of attacks can be used against ghosts by using Spirit in place of Life.)

- ...magicks, such as Forces, augmented with Prime (including weapon Talismans that utilize Prime in their damage). This does not include Forces, Life or Matter created with Prime, only attacks utilizing Prime to "energize" damage. (For example, Spawning Minor Forces does not incur aggravated damage, while the Talons rote in The

Book of Shadows, which uses a point of Quintessence each time it hits, does).

- ...the natural weaponry of supernatural creatures.
- ...Spirit magicks that summon spirits to directly attack a target.
- ...attacks using vulgar Entropy magick to affect a body directly.

In all other cases, damage is non-aggravated. Magick may heal the damage normally. As a special note, Mind magicks never do aggravated damage.

One clarification about damage and casting magick should also be made here: a character who is injured does have his Dice Pools for Attribute + Ability rolls reduced because of injuries. However, Health Level penalties should not subtract from rolls for casting magick (such as rolls against Arete). Using Arete is a state of mind, not of the body; having a broken leg or fractured rib will not prevent you from drawing upon your understanding of the Spheres.

Rules Topics

The following entries cover specific situations that might arise during a Storyteller crossover game.

Mind Control

Various supernatural factions of the World of Darkness have the power to cloud minds, and even control them. However, most people get the chance to defend against mind control using their Willpower (see the particular rules given with whatever power is used). Some characters even have the ability to magically defend against this form of attack. Use the default rules for power levels given above. Mages must use the Mind Sphere for defense. A Garou must have a Gift that allows him to defend against such attacks (the Silver Fang Gift: **Mindblock** is one example). Kindred have no common Discipline that allows them to defend.

True Faith

True Faith can reward the faithful with many miraculous abilities and some effects that are fairly reliable, such as the power to ward against vampires. However, True Faith cannot necessarily ward against werewolves. In certain circumstances, a believer may turn a Garou with a sprig of wolfsbane, but this believer must wholeheartedly subscribe to this belief, and it is rare to find this in the modern world. Let's face it, most people are embarrassed to admit they believe in old wives' tales. Simply discovering the true existence of werewolves will not mean they believe all the hooey told about them throughout the years. In other words, most player characters are just too savvy to be able to summon belief in the effectiveness of wolfsbane.

Sometimes, True Faith can be used to ward against the hauntings and harassment of ghosts. The departed dead

can sometimes be sent away with a prayer of deliverance—and sometimes they can't.

As stated in the *Book of Shadows*, True Faith can sometimes act as countermagick against mages. Rules for using True Faith against vampires can be found in *Vampire Players Guide* and *Hunters Hunted*. (Admittedly, which version you use can depend on whether your chronicle is centered on Kindred or hunters. Always give a hero a chance.)

Clarifying Thaumaturgy

Thaumaturgy is a word in the English language referring to magic. Some dictionaries define it with more detail than others. The term shows up in many different contexts in different Storyteller games. To help navigate through the sea of confusion, use the guidelines below. If the term "thaumaturgy" does not appear in any of the contexts below, then assume it is just a euphemism for magic in general. If the term is capitalized, assume it refers to vampiric Thaumaturgy.

All three forms of thaumaturgy work in a static fashion—that is, thaumaturgy works the same way every time. These variants of magic do not invoke Paradox, but the effects that a such magician can use are very limited. True Magick reworks the fabric of reality; the new pattern risks Paradox, true, but offers a mage much more flexibility than a static ritual.

- **Vampiric Thaumaturgy:** This is the most common usage in Storyteller systems. It refers to the Discipline of Thaumaturgy usually practiced by the Tremere clan. It is also known as blood magic, and it seems to derive from some special property of vampire blood. Only Kindred and their ghouls have been known to use this type of magic. For details, see the *Vampire* rulebook, pp. 168-171.

- **Hedge Magic:** This form of ritual magic, as given in the *Vampire* sourcebook *The Hunters Hunted* (pp. 63-64), is sometimes called Thaumaturgy. It is not to be confused with the vampiric Discipline. It is a more limited form of folk magic. More guidelines for Hedge Magick appear in *Ascension's Right Hand*.

- **Dark Thaumaturgy:** This is demonic magic, as practiced by some members of the Sabbat sect of vampires and non-mage Diabolists. Those who would use this type of magic must either sell their souls or do something equally stupid. See *Storytellers Handbook to the Sabbat*, pp. 50-58.

Magickally Creating Sunlight

A mage may want to perform this effect to destroy vampires or drive them from the area of effect. If done during the day, the mage must simply figure a way to shine the existing light onto a desired target. This can involve causing windows to break and allow shafts of light in, or creating a series of mirrors to reflect the sunlight down an air duct to a deep basement where it normally never shines.

If performed at night, it invariably involves conjuring sunlight from nothing. It is most certainly vulgar magick and is a conjunctural effect requiring Prime 2 and Forces 3. Without Prime, light can be created, but it will lack the necessary reality, or Pattern, to make real sunlight, which will affect vampires. Simple ultraviolet radiation is not good enough.

If it is a direct magic effect, then use the normal rules for damage, based on Sphere level and number of successes, and the rules given above for direct attacks. If it is not direct, use the rules for sunlight damage given in the *Vampire* rulebook, pg. 194. Needless to say, this sunlight may temporarily blind people other than vampires, but it will not harm them.

Breaking the Blood Bond

A vampiric Blood Bond can be broken through magick, but potent magick is required. How well the player describes the magickal effect will determine whether it is coincidental or vulgar. A conjunctural effect of the following Spheres is required: Entropy 3, Prime 1, Mind 3, Life 4.

In addition, the mage must have some knowledge of the nature of the Blood Bond. He cannot destroy what he does not understand. Thus, a character will need to research lore on the Blood Bond, or possess the Kindred Lore Ability (and succeed on a roll of Intelligence + Kindred Lore). Medicine, Occult or Leadership could work as a complementary Ability.

Multiple Actions

Vampires with Celerity may take more than one action per turn without splitting their Dice Pools. Garou may take one extra action per turn for every Rage point they spend. How can mages equal this flurry of activity? The Accelerate Time Effect (using Time 3) allows for extra actions. See p. 218 of the *Mage* rulebook.

Draining Caerns

Garou do not like mages: they often accuse them of draining their sacred caerns. How does a mage do this, and why?

Caerns are incredible stores of Quintessence. Mages may at some point wish to "recharge their batteries" at a nearby Node. This is not much of an issue in Mexico City—the poisonous Quintessence of the Underbelly would taint any magicks used with its assistance. Sometimes, however, this comes into play elsewhere. Werewolves consider their caerns to be sacred ground. Few non-Garou visitors are ever permitted within the bawn of the average caern (urban caerns, obviously, are often an exception to this). Even fewer visitors would ever be permitted to draw off of Gaia's holy energy to fuel human magicks. Some bargains have been struck from time to time, but such alliances are quite unusual.

Rank Three Prime magick is required to tap into a caern's Quintessence; strong caerns (Level 3 and above) must be "broken into" using Spirit 4 to sunder the spiritual protections of the place. This latter Effect will be violently opposed by any Garou in the vicinity! If the werewolves have granted the mage permission to access the caern, the Warder will help her tap the caern's energy through him. Again, this is not lightly done; a very compelling reason must be given. "Hey, he's my friend... he's cool," will not suffice.

Once the Quintessence has been tapped, assume that a caern has a maximum pool of ten points of Quintessence per level of the caern. If you don't want to worry about such numbers, just assume that one or two mages can fill their Patterns before the werewolves call a halt. Tass can be gathered at some caerns (see *The Book of Shadows*), but the werewolves will not be amused.

Harming Others Magickally

A mage cannot simply hurt a supernatural being with a mere flick of the wrist. It requires magick (or a hefty gun with silver bullets, or a stout wooden stake, a falling building, etc.). Use the following guidelines for direct magick aimed at supernaturals of odd constitution. (Garou are considered human as far as the normal magick rules apply here.)

Vampires: A conjucational effect of Matter and Life is required to directly harm a vampire with vulgar magick. They are not wholly living or dead (inert matter), but incorporate a living element (blood) in their system. Any aggravated damage Effect must usually use these Spheres.

Wraiths: Life magick cannot harm a wraith. Instead, a conjucational effect of Entropy and Prime is required. Spirit magick affects a wraith like the Life Sphere affects the living, but Life and Matter have no effect whatsoever. Note that, unless a wraith is Embodied, mages must use Spirit Sense to see a ghost in the first place. A successful Perception + Awareness can often alert the mage to the wraith's presence. The difficulty of this roll will usually be 6, but may vary with circumstances.

The Rite of the Dead

Level Five

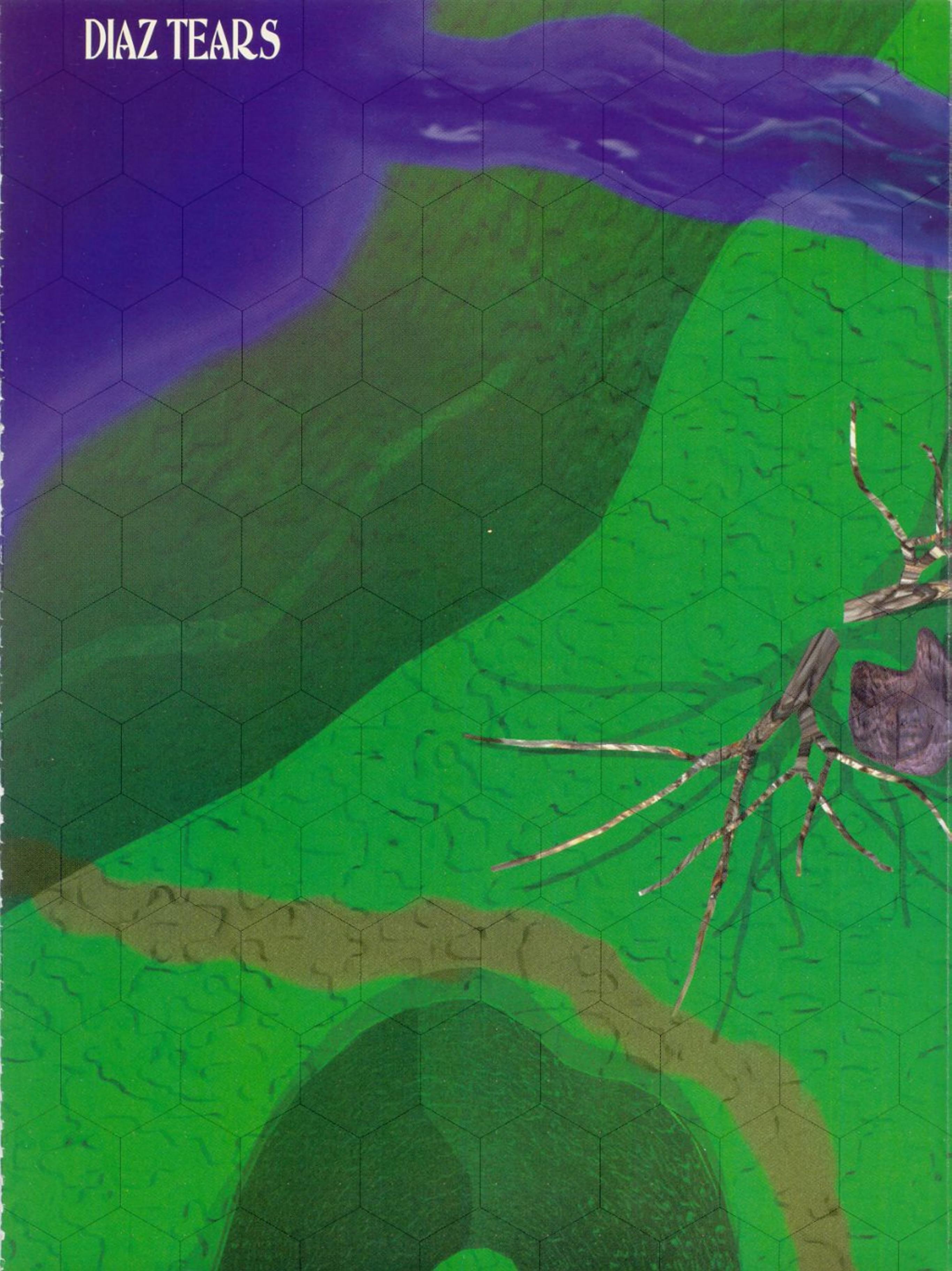
This rite, a combination Rite of Death and Mystic Rite, seeks to placate hostile spirits before whisking them from the living world, returning them to the Shadowlands (the Penumbra of the dead) before they can be corrupted and turned loose into the Wyrm-wracked city. By raising the Gauntlet (called the Shroud by some members of the Restless Dead) between the worlds of the living and the dead, the local Bone Gnawers restore balance and avert further chaos during the Days of the Dead.

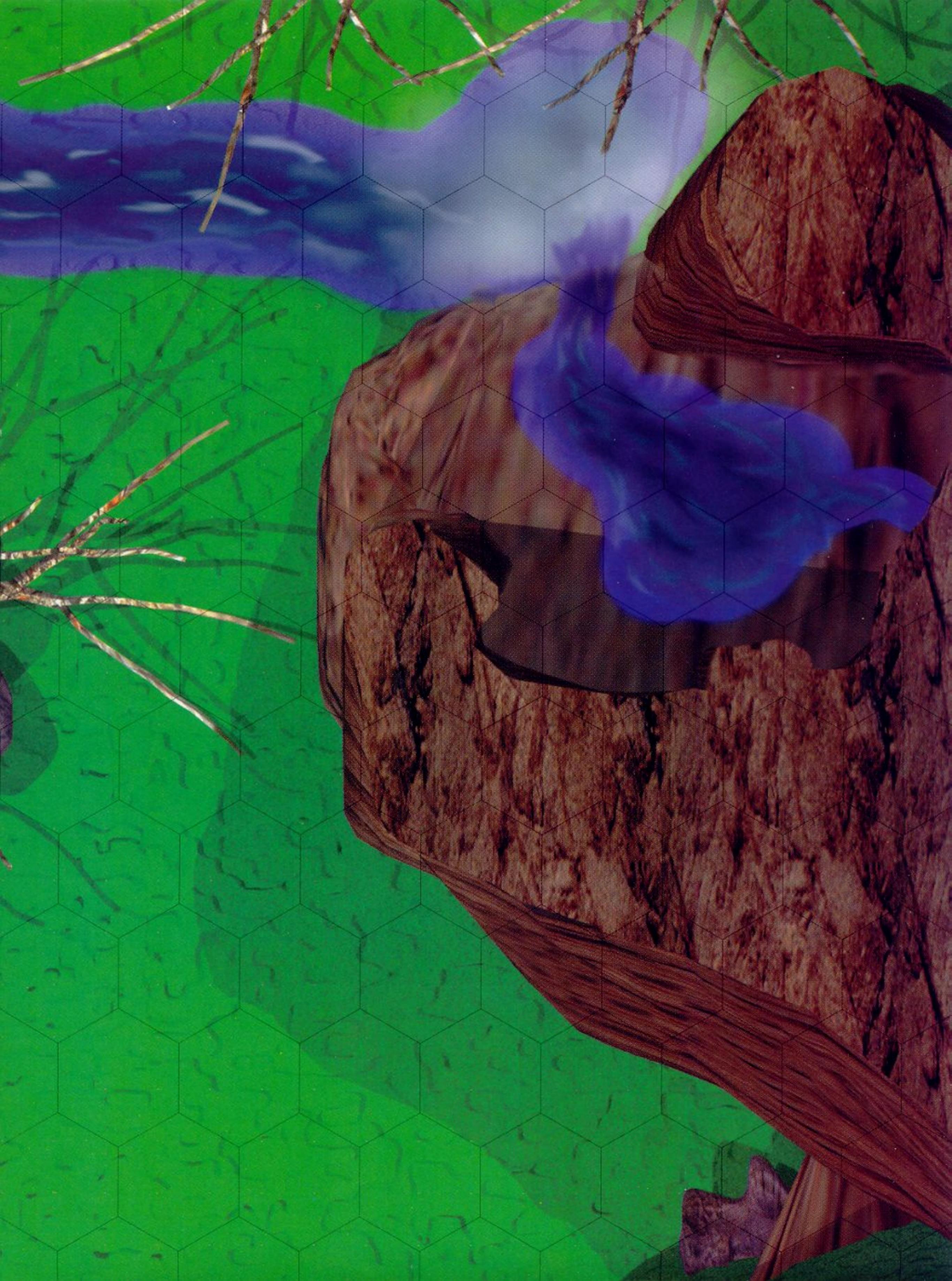
The Rite of the Dead is a local rite, created decades ago by Father Pelo Blanco, a Bone Gnawer spirit-speaker, to protect the worlds of living and dead from each other during the traditional observance. Each year, the Sweet Water Sept performs the rite at the climax of the Days of the Dead. Because of the seasonal nature of both the human celebration and the Garou rite, the Rite of the Dead is only effective during this time.

The rite takes many hours to perform. As the ritemaster begins the chant, the other Garou dance, sing and drink themselves into an ecstatic state. As the power gradually builds, the Gauntlet between the worlds thickens, casting wraiths outside of haunts back into the Shadowlands, trapping them on the other side of the Shroud. Praises and offerings to the spirits, made during the rite itself, placate the ghosts somewhat. Many return to their usual existence satiated for a time by the brief freedom they have enjoyed. Come next year, the cycle will begin again.

System: The ritemaster makes a Charisma + Rituals roll, difficulty 9. For every ten werewolves participating in the rite, the difficulty is reduced by 1. Success banishes all ghosts within the city from the living world for one week per success rolled. The Shroud is effectively raised to 10 for the duration, preventing ghosts from affecting the living world. No ritemaster in Mexico city has ever failed this important task. One shudders to think what would happen if he did...

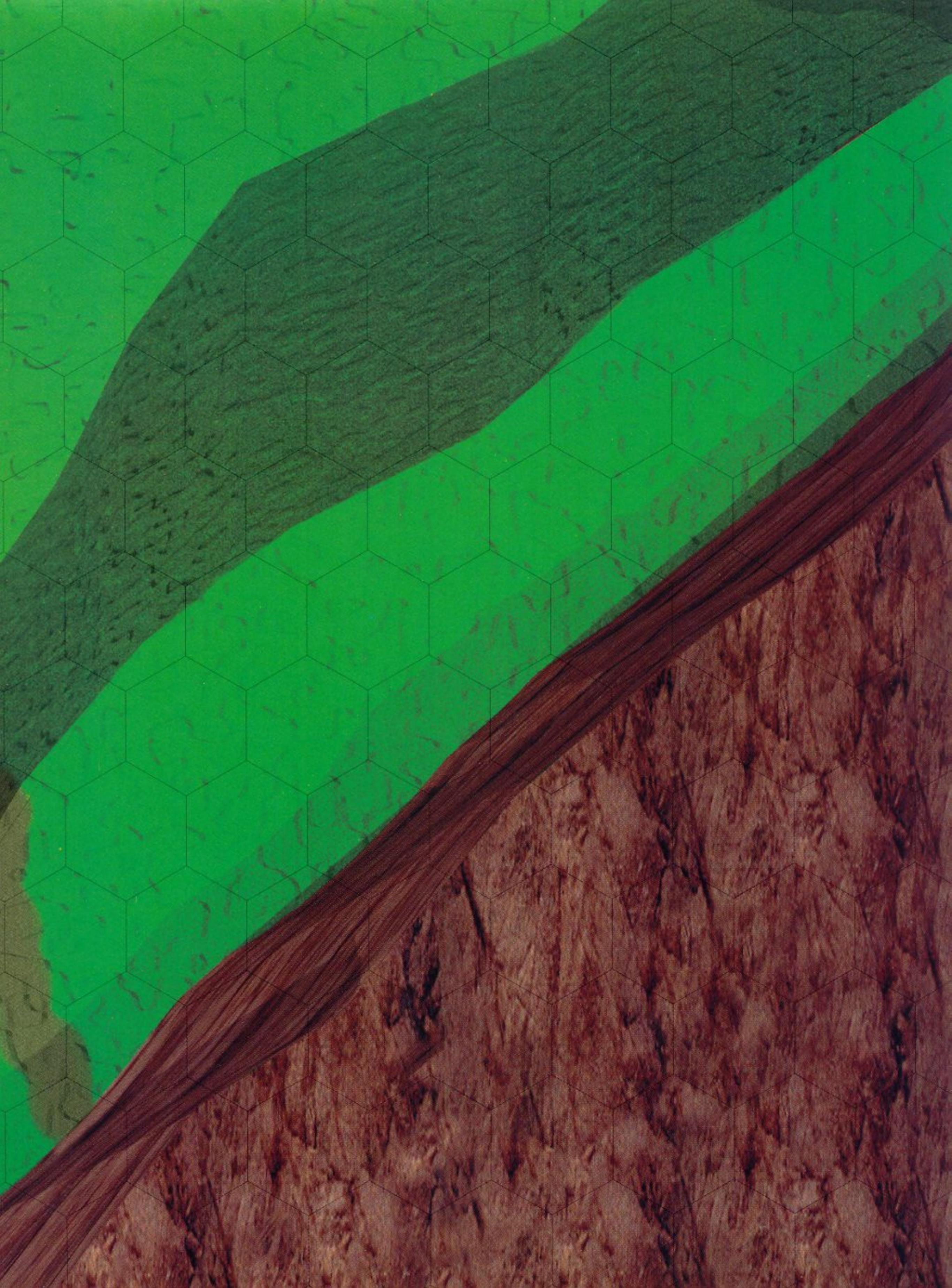
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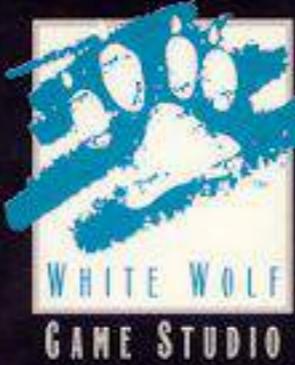
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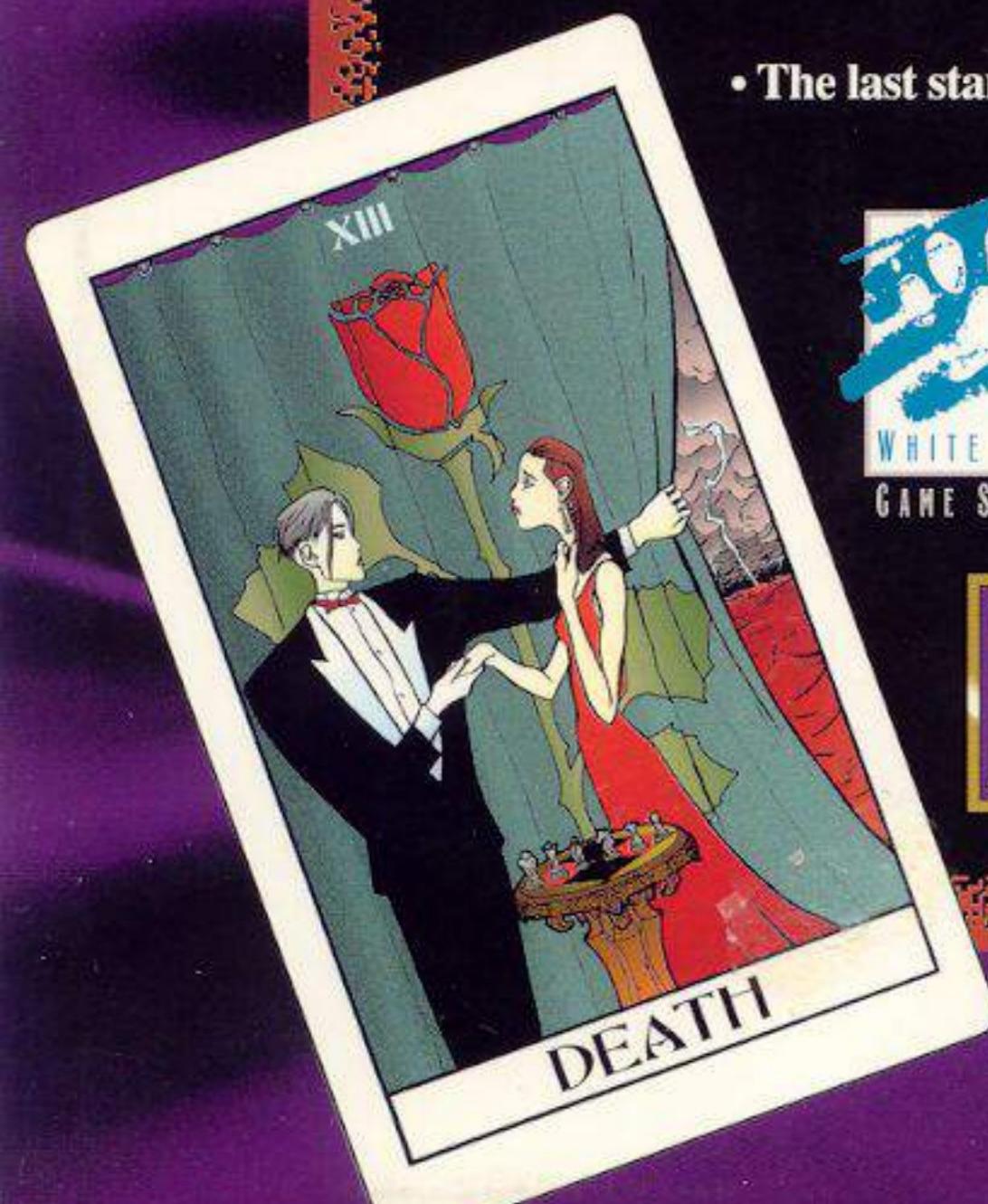
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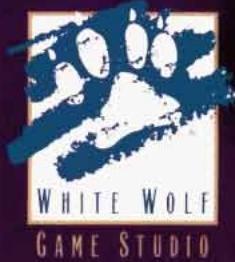
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